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BY

HAWLEY SMART

AUTHOR OF
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ETC., ETC.

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THREE EPISODES IN

JIM OGILVIE'S LIFE.

I.

My Grandfather's Codicil.

"Well, if this sort of thing lasts I shall winter in blankets, for there'll be neither sheets nor pillow-cases left to the bed. I must dispose of all superfluous furniture, and cut down washing bills to the minimum. Hang it, I never had such a meeting. Those Ring beggars won't know what to do with their money."

The speaker was a slight, wiry man, with thin, compressed lips, and keen grey eyes that seemed ever on the watch. The soil was unfavourable to the growth of hair, and the possessor equally so: he was clean-shaved,

wearing neither moustache nor whisker. He might have been any age between thirty and forty for all his face indicated, yet men who knew Norman Slade would have told you he couldn't be far from fifty. He had been known on the turf, one might say, from his boyhood. You were always hearing how "hot" poor Norman had caught it, and according to his own account he was seldom a winner. Still, year after year went by, and Norman Slade, neatly dressed as ever, was to be seen at every meeting of importance throughout the season. What were his resources, what was his family, were questions no one could have answered; he had never been heard to speak of either. He lived at a fashionable West End Club, and one met him everywhere except in women's society. At fast dinners at Richmond or Greenwich, where indeed the ladies belonged to the *corps de ballet*, or were even of still more questionable antecedents; on four-in-hand drags —in short, in all places where men do congregate, there you ran against Norman Slade; but in what is called society, meaning my

Lady Dumdum's "squash," or the Marchioness of Juniper's suffocation soirées, you never encountered him. He said they weren't in his way. It might be so, or it might be that he had not the key of that inner sanctuary. Any way, he seemed to care but little about it.

The scene of Norman Slade's remark is one of those queer, half-furnished sitting-rooms, for which you pay such fabulous rents during a Newmarket race week. He and his companions are "assisting" at the Second October Meeting. They have dined, it is to be hoped, satisfactorily, though the faces of the party look none of the brightest. In fact, the week has gone hard with backers, and there is but one day more left for fortune to turn in, or, in technical language, only one day now "to get home in."

"You're right, Norman, we've had a devil of a time of it," said Jim Ogilvie, as he took the cigar from his lips. "I did think I should have lasted this year; but I hardly know what to say about it now."

The speaker was another mystery; a tall, good-looking, fair-haired fellow, of five or six and twenty, with a *blonde* moustache. Everybody knew all about Jim's family and resources; the former was good, the latter supposed to have been utterly exhausted three years ago. What puzzled society was how Jim Ogilvie, fastest of subalterns in the Household Cavalry, had managed to hang on in "the Blues." Jim himself manifested as much astonishment as anybody else.

"Only living from quarter to quarter," he would say. "How the deuce I've stayed three years I don't know. Begin to think I may last another three now if I get over the next quarter."

Getting over the next quarter was Jim's battle of life—that devil-may-care child of pleasure never troubling his head about rocks further ahead.

There are two more of the party. That tall, bronzed, bearded man, smoking the cutty pipe, is Tom Wroughton, a cousin of Ogilvie's. He went out to Queensland, sheep farming, some

five years ago, and he is doing very well at it. He has just returned to England on a few months' cruise, partly on business and partly to look up his old friends, leaving his partner to look after "the run." He dearly loves a bit of racing, and was easily persuaded by Jim to join his party for Newmarket, and see the "Middle Park Plate" and the "Cæsarewitch."

That stout, jolly little man, whose bead-like eyes sparkle so behind his spectacles, is Quaver, the celebrated "Vet.," or, as he punctiliously insists upon it, Dr. Quaver. He looks upon himself as the Skey or Ferguson of the equine race, and, as he is in the habit of boasting, can give either of those eminent surgeons 10lbs. and a beating. He undoubtedly is as clever a "vet." as ever patched a screw, though his practice lies quite amongst the aristocracy of horse-flesh; and he is wont to be called in to Derby favourites when suffering from influenza, or whatever ill may have betided those heavily-backed horses. Very conceited of his own abilities, always believing that were

he consulted *in time* no horse would have ever come to positive grief,—of a convivial disposition, singing a good song when called on, and sometimes when not,—he goes among his intimates by the nickname of the "Harmonious Blacksmith." This, by the way, is only behind his back. He is, as all men are more or less, aware of his nickname, and bitterly resents any such trifling with his dignity.

"Not much consolation to be got out of that, eh, Norman?"—Slade was busily engaged running over his betting-book—"I generally carefully avoid taking up mine under these circumstances till the whole thing's over," said Jim Ogilvie. "It takes the pluck out of you, makes one bet funky, and one never gets out of a mucker that way. Our only chance is having confidence in our opinions to-morrow. Looking at what mine have been this week so far, would be apt to check my boldness in asserting them, and as things stand at present that's not to be thought of."

"Don't suppose you do think much of these things, Jim, any more than you do what

becomes of it when you land a good stake," replied Slade.

"Think, then!" laughed Ogilvie, "on my word, I'm spared much trouble thinking about it. It seems as patent to my creditors and the Jews as if I had advertised it in the *Times*. The vultures jostle round me in clouds. I'm never so beset as when I've had a good week. Never so teased and dunned. I never can make them believe they've got it all. They always multiply my winnings by ten, and I have hard work to keep a little for myself to go on with. If it ever got about I had won ten thousand, it would be all over with me—I should probably have won about fifteen hundred; but they'd think the time had come for picking my bones—that I should never be fatter."

"Ha! ha! Ogilvie," chuckled the Doctor (we must call him so), "you should take a leaf out of our friend Slade's book; he don't let people hear much about his coups. No, no; mum's the word,—dark as we keep a favourite's sore shins!"

Slade favoured the Doctor with a sharp glance of his restless grey eyes. "Easy to keep coups to yourself that never were made. I never had any fancy for bragging of winnings that exist only in imagination."

"All very well, my boy; but men don't last on the turf sixteen or eighteen years without ever getting a turn. We don't keep horses in training that never win."

"It strikes me," said Wroughton, "that a great change has come over the racing world since I was last at home. Men bet now in such enormous sums. Men with hundreds a year bet heavier than men with as many thousands did in my day, whilst those with thousands bet as if they had millions at their back."

"Quite right, my dear sir, quite right. We are suffering, like the commercial world, from over-speculation. There's no certainty in racing. If men will 'go' their whole capital on one coup, their career must be short and sensational. Every fool knows that the layers wax fat: they always will; but now they make their fortunes in no time. 'The

Plungers' have made it so. For one thing, the Ring, knowing they *will* bet, and bet largely, never give a reasonable price in these days. We punters never can get a tenner on now on fair terms."

"Tell you what," broke in Jim Ogilvie, "it's all the establishment of those confounded clubs, the Victoria, the Albert, and so on. The Ring arrange prices there amongst themselves, and come down to Tattersall's with a cut-and-dried price against every horse, and an understanding that nobody's to vary above a point or so. They may let the stable commissioner get on a shade better at the clubs, but they won't the outside public."

"Bosh," said Norman Slade. "You're talking nonsense, Jim. It's just like any other commercial speculation, a case of supply and demand. If there's a deal of money palpably to go on a horse, his price shortens; if there's none, it falls. Market prices on big races are just like shares in anything else. You buy for a fall or a rise; that is, you lay or back. The Ring work much the same as the stock-

brokers, are just as honest, and rather safer with reference to payment. The Doctor's right, that 'the Plungers' have made short prices, that's a case of demand; the money makes it so——"

"Do you bet much in Australia, Mr. Wroughton?" inquired the Doctor. "You've some goodish horses and goodish racing out there, judging by the papers?"

"We have some good horses; some of the best blood of the old country is out there, and before another twenty years are over, you'll see us have a cut at the Blue Ribbon with an Australian bred one, and perhaps win it too. We don't bet as you do here; but our people, in colony vernacular, 'plank it up' at times pretty stiff."

"I shouldn't wonder if you're about right there, Wroughton, and the first Australian colt that comes over to have a shy for the Derby, I, for one, shall go to look at before I put him down as 'incapable.'" And Norman Slade lit a fresh cigar, and drew his chair up to the fire.

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"Ah, well," said Jim, "if I am still going in those days, I shall look to you for an early tip, Tom. You'll have to drop me a line, when you Australians mean sending a promising young one, and I'll go in for some of the thousands to fifteen. We'll appoint Quaver here physician-in-chief. You'll keep him on his legs, eh, Doctor?"

"If he's got any legs at all, I'll do that. Mind, it's Dr. Quaver tells you so, and when he's past my curing, the sooner you send him to 'The Langham,' for cooking purposes, the better. By the way, do you ever eat horse out there?"

"No," laughed Wroughton; "beef and mutton are plentiful, especially the latter. But you'll never eat horse in this country; you can't afford it. It's all very well to talk of cooking twenty-year-old horses, but nobody likes old bullocks or old rams, or old fowls; worn-out animals are never good for food, and killing four-year-old horses for the table will be an expensive luxury."

"D-- it," said Norman, with a grin, "there's a two-year-old or so at present, some

of us would pay pretty high to kill and cook; we'd eat 'em, too, with a relish, whether we liked it or not."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Doctor. "It'd be a relief to the Ring to hear that Mr. Fortinbras, the great butcher in Bond Street, had bought Lady Elizabeth for gastronomic purposes. I can fancy the gusto with which some of those fellows would order their sirloin, as they looked over the twenties laid last Ascot."

"Ring the bell, Tom, will you," said Ogilvie, "and give the fire a stir—it's confoundedly cold. I shall go in for a little brandy and water. I got quite chilled on that infernal Heath to-day. Losing's always chilly work, ain't it, Doctor?"

"Yes, sir, it's apt to stop the circulation a bit. For quickening the pulse there's nothing like landing a raker. Very good idea of yours; I feel I should like a little hot grog myself. Anybody mean going down to the rooms to-night? Don't think our luck is good enough for a little punting, is it? What do you say, Slade?"

"'Not for me.' I seldom indulge in that, even when in luck; the pull's too dead against you."

"Well," said Jim, "a very old stager told me once he never played but when he was out of luck. 'While you're winning on the grass, don't go losing on the baize,' was his motto; but he said, when nothing went right on the race-course, he always went and tried what he could do with a specified sum at the tables. 'I go down to lose so much, and no more; if I win a fixed sum, I stop also.' The devil with me is, I never know when to stop winning or losing." And, lost in the retrospect this reflection called up, Jim gazed into the fire, and smoked on in silence.

The entrance of a servant girl, with hot water and glasses, roused the party from their moody silence.

"Here you are, gentlemen! nothing like a hot glass of brandy and water to wash down a facer with. Let's become of 'that valooable class of men that look through brandy toddy;' we shall take a more genial view of life after a

tumbler of hot and strong," and, whistling a popular melody, the Doctor compounded a steaming jorum.

"I'm afraid you got it rather hard to-day, Jim," said Wroughton.

"Yes, nasty for *me*: but then I'm used to it. I'm always getting it over the knuckles, or having a turn of luck—up and down, winning and losing. By Jove," he said, "I get so sick of it sometimes that I think if I wasn't so regularly over head and ears, I'd forswear the thing altogether; turn virtuous, abjure 'cakes and ale,' and 'ginger hot i' the mouth.'"

You see he'd been having a hard time of it this week, and, like the devil under similar circumstances, felt an inclination to turn moralist.

Norman Slade laughed—it was not a pleasant laugh to hear—a cold, hard, sarcastic laugh, that jarred on the ear like a false note.

"Yes, Jim," he said, "we all turn moral, my boy, when the shoe pinches. That wasn't a bad sermon Whyte Melville preached us

about 'tight boots,' in 'Good for Nothing.' Most of us hanker after green fields and Arcadian innocence when our sins find us out, and we've got to pay the piper. There's nothing like being well squeezed to produce a fit of penitence. What a sympathy we feel for the teetotal movement the morning after a big drink! How we bury our head in the sheets and curse cards and our folly after a bad night at loo, as the morning brings our I O U's to our recollection! Sheer hypocrisy — we're disgusted with our vices because the pretty things have stung us sharply, but we get over the sting and hug them closer than before. I don't believe much in reformation myself. Men give up gambling because they've nothing left to gamble with; as they give up drinking and other follies when their constitutions give way."

"Confound you, Norman; won't you allow any one to think he's been making a fiasco of his life, and might do something better if he tried?"

"Certainly. I only laugh at repentance

that crops up when things don't run smooth. I judge by myself, and by what I see. I believe I had it in me once to run for higher stakes than my life has been passed in playing for; I know it's too late now, though in earlier days I've had my paroxysms like you, Jim; but it won't do; you're no more likely to break your bonds than I am. What's called pleasure bores me now; it don't you. The turf's my vocation; I'm fit for nothing else. One pull I have over you, you're not fit even for that."

Jim's face flushed as he asked angrily, "Why not?"

No man likes to be told he cannot ride. No man who embarks in turf pursuits likes to be told he is utterly unfitted for them.

"Because you are a deal too excitable; you can't play cool; when you win, you've fits of reckless extravagance; when you lose——"

"Well, what then?"

"You've fits of penitence and morality. Neither are consonant with the pursuit; your nerve should be iron; your equanimity im-

movable, and your motto 'In utramque fortunam paratus.'"

"Jove, Norman, you're a cool fish."

'I shouldn't be here now, if I wasn't," was the unmoved rejoinder.

"Hang it," said the doctor, "let's talk of something else; this conversation won't do to go to bed on. I shall dream of Derby favourites all night that came to grief from neglect. There's Student, for instance; I wish I had had the management of that case."

"Wouldn't have done a bit better for it, Doctor. Neither you nor the whole Veterinary College would have kept him on his legs," rejoined Slade. "I made a goodish thing out of him."

"I don't know, I don't know, sir; these trainers go on blundering about a horse when he goes a little wrong, and never call in our profession till it's too late."

"Well, Tom, you're a lucky man; you don't bet; you don't know the disappointment of being done by a neck for a good stake," said Jim Ogilvie.

"You think not? I don't bet certainly; and yet, not many years ago, I was very near landing what I think you would call a big stake on the Derby—some fifteen or sixteen thousand pounds."

Jim opened his eyes and stared with mute astonishment at his cousin, whom he had never known to bet more than an occasional fiver.

Norman Slade and the Doctor also cast inquiring glances. Quite a chorus at last of "How was that?" followed Wroughton's statement.

"It's a longish story," rejoined Tom; "but if you fellows are in the humour for a yarn, I'll tell it you. Don't look so astonished, Jim; you're quite right, I never bet. To tell my story aright, I must go back to the days of my grandfather. He was a turfite for many years, and preciously he burnt his fingers at the amusement. I suppose there seldom was a man with such a genius for backing 'dead uns,' or laying the long odds against a promising two-year old for the big events, as my

grandfather. Saxilby, as you know, Jim, was pretty strictly entailed; lucky it was, or the devil a thing my father would have come into but a claim on parochial relief. What acres he could, my grandfather made away with. As long as anybody would 'do a mortgage' on the property, and my father would consent, my grandfather was open to deal and always liberal about the per-centage. The old Saxilby oaks I have often heard talked about; but when my respected progenitor died there wasn't what the Americans call a better 'clearing' in England. I have been told he began to take great care of his tenants' interests about the time any further advance on the property was impracticable, and felled a deal of timber to prevent damage to the crops. For the last few years of his life he had to abandon his favourite pursuit; as Slade says, he gave it up because it gave him up—he'd no more money to wager.

"Still the old gentleman, though he no longer attended race-meetings, took the greatest possible interest in them. He studied the

sporting intelligence closely, and slept with the calendar under his pillow. About this time he took to dreaming of it, and, if his own assertions may be believed, was always dreaming the winners. Pity he didn't take to that branch a little earlier, and I'd have been a richer man now."

"By Jove," said Jim, "a sort of clairvoyante 'Judex.' Wonder whether the old boy did dream right, or whether it was all gammon?"

"Listen, and you shall hear. The old gentleman at last departed, was packed away snug in the family vault, and his will duly read. I needn't dwell upon that more than this. There was a codicil to the will to the effect that two hundred pounds invested in the funds was to accumulate till '62, then to be disposed of as a sealed letter directed, the said letter not to be opened till the 20th of May in that year by his then direct representative. How he'd ever got the two hundred was rather a mystery, but the disappearance of an elm avenue about that time might account for it.

"My father and grandfather had been on bad terms for some years. My father was of a gloomy, saturnine temperament, very different from the rollicking, sanguine disposition of his sire; he hated the turf, and was furious at what he called the desecration of the old place, meaning the way in which the ancestral oaks were felled; he had a great idea of being a conscientious landowner, and was painfully aware that the property was going to the dogs."

"Yes," said Norman; "men get a little put out when they see their progenitors getting through that which they had rather looked forward to getting through themselves."

"There you are wrong. I don't think that was my father's feeling a bit, he'd have taken a pride in handing down the property totally unencumbered to Bob, my elder brother. His whole time was passed in unavailing efforts to put it straight, and in the twenty years he had it he did a great deal—cleared off a lot of mortgages, and so on; but though he planted conscientiously, centuries must elapse before the old Saxilby oaks are got up again. When

he succeeded, there were three of us in family; but my sister, who was the eldest, died when she was about fourteen. As we grew older, my father was wont at times to dwell on this mysterious codicil and letter, to my brother and myself. Over and over again have I heard the story of my grandfather's death-bed. The old gentleman at the last got rather penitent about the ducks and drakes he'd made of the property.

"'I've been a bad steward for you, Sam,' he said, addressing my father. 'I have left you an inheritance sorely encumbered; but you were always one of the steady-going ones, and you'll save the old place yet, I know. I am loath to think it should ever depart from the Wroughtons; you must plant, you must plant. The old oaks went over more "good things" than I can call to mind now; I always thought to get it back, and leave the property clear. I'm sorry for the trees; but there'll be a turn for you all yet, when you get to '62; that money, if you carry out my intentions, will grow; ah! faster than you think, my

boy; you'll get straight with the world that year. I know, I know it! But the trees, Sam, we can't put them back again, can we? I know you didn't like the old elm avenue going; but it was all for your good, lad, all for your good. You'll come round in '62; there, good-bye, I can't talk any more now; but I'm sorry for the trees——'

"Something like this was my grandfather's last speech.

"As my father used to say, 'What he meant, boys, I can't tell. Two hundred in the funds can't grow into more than a thousand pounds by that time, and that won't do much for us. What on earth his letter contains I can't guess. I may not live to see it; but, Bob, carry out his wishes, whatever they be. The thousand pounds can't make much difference any way. I used to cross him so much when living, I'd be loath to now he's dead; yet, my boy, it was hard lines to see the old oaks I had played under as a child coming down to satisfy the legs and robbers at Newmarket; and then, boy, I thought a little of

you when you, in your turn, should come into an estate without so much as a decent walking-stick on it.'

"Well, a little before Bob came of age—he is some two years older than I—the poor old gov. died. One of his last remarks was: 'Think of your grandfather's letter, Bob, when you come to '62. I've thought of it many times, and never could make head or tail of it; but it somehow comes to me now as if good luck of some kind would turn up, if you carry out his intentions strictly.'

"A few nights after our father's death, Bob and I were talking over many things that had to be arranged, and we once more got on the subject of this letter.

"'Where is it?' I inquired.

"'Where all our papers are,' said Bob, 'in Hugesson's and Bromley's office, Lincoln's Inn. I'm awfully curious to know about that letter, ain't you? so much as we've heard of it.'

"'Yes; but it's ten years to run yet. Suppose one forgot all about it when the time came.'

"'No fear; Hugesson and Co. know all about it, and are certain to write and refresh our memories, even if one wanted a reminder.'

"'Well, we're young now,' I answered, 'but we may have many things to think of before ten years are out.'

"For some half-dozen years, Bob and I lived on at the old place; I'd just enough with the pull of free quarters to make me independent of a profession, and yet was a poor man. I don't know anything worse for a young fellow than that sort of life. At the end of that time, Bob married; of course, he never intended it should make any difference to me; there was my old room as it always had been. I got on, too, very well with my sister-in-law; but you fellows know just as well as I do, that it wasn't the same thing; of course, there wasn't the same freedom about it there had been in the old bachelor days. I tried it for a bit, and then took lodgings in town, though I still went down to the Hall a good deal for the hunting and shooting. About this time I began to

realize how little a couple of hundred a-year or so was when you were put upon your own resources."

"Quite right," broke in Jim. "Just the sort of income a man can do nothing but go to the devil on."

"Unless," chuckled the Doctor, "he went in for marrying a pile of money."

"Don't interrupt the story," said Norman Slade. "I am curious to come to this letter."

"Very near it now," said Wroughton. "We had got to the beginning of '61 when, by way of improving my position, I fell in love with Annie, now my wife. She was no fortune, though she had something of her own. We were engaged. We had both of us been brought up in big houses, and should have to begin life in a very humble way compared with what we had been accustomed to; and the worst of it was I couldn't see how it was ever to be bettered. I'd been brought up to nothing, and couldn't see how I was ever to turn a shilling in this country. I was precious down on my luck, I can tell you.

As for waiting twenty years I couldn't see we should be a bit better able to marry then than we were at that moment. About that time I ran against an old chum of mine just home from Australia. He had been out there seven or eight years, and had done well. I told him my troubles, and he strongly advised me to come out and join him.

"'I'll put you in the way of a fair start,' he said; 'and if you can scrape together some eight or ten thousand pounds capital to begin with, and are good to stick really to it, you'll make a moderate fortune in some ten or twelve years.'

"Well, I thought it over, and at last I resolved to go. I had near six thousand of my own, and knew Bob would help me to raise three or four more. So if Annie would only consent, I determined to try it. We talked it over, and, like a good plucky girl as she is, she said, 'Do what you think best, Tom. I'm not afraid of having to rough it with you. It would be better than living poor at home. If you think it well to go,

I'll do my best to be a settler's wife to you.' And well she's done it, though, poor girl, she had to rough it more than I calculated on at starting; but, thank heaven, that's over now."

"Yes," said Slade; "those thorough-bred women are of the right sort. It's wonderful how plucky and game they are in difficulties."

"Well, I told Bob what I was about to do, and what I wanted of him. He didn't quite like the idea; but at last saw it was the most sensible thing for me, and promised me all I required.

"'There's only one thing, Tom,' he said; 'don't forget next year we are to open the letter and see what comes of our "Grandfather's Codicil." Promise me not to start till after that.'

"As it only made a few months' difference, I agreed to wait.

"The beginning of May I was married, Bob and his wife coming up for the wedding. We were to do our bridal trip to Paris, and the beginning of July I was to sail for Australia.

"'Time'll be up for the letter by your return from France,' laughed Bob, as he shook hands at the carriage steps, 'and then we'll solve the mystery.'

"'Never mind waiting for my return,' I said; 'open it without me.'

"'Oh, nonsense! so often as we've talked it over and speculated on it, that would be horrid mean; the old gentleman's secret had been fairly kept all these years, and a few days more or less won't make any difference. Good-bye, Annie, pleasant trip. Mind, I shall expect you at Saxilby on your return.'

"When one marries a girl one is really fond of, I suppose the wedding trip is one of the most sunshiny bits in a man's life. I know mine was, and we stayed mooning about France a week or ten days longer than I had originally intended. May slipped away. However, on Tuesday, the 10th of June—mark the date, please, for the story hangs on this—we arrived once more in London. Bob and I had settled we would meet in town, and go down to Saxilby together. The next morning Annie

and I went to call upon them. After the first salutations and gossip were over, Bob said:

"'Old Hugesson has been at me about "the letter;" says it ought to have been opened three weeks ago. Suppose we go up to Lincoln's Inn at once? You can leave Annie here with Bella, and we'll come back to lunch, and tell them all about the awful mystery.'

"You may be sure the ladies had heard of 'the letter' many times.

"'Agreed,' said I, and away we went.

"'Not very business-like, Mr. Wroughton,' said old Hugesson, laughing, on our arrival at Lincoln's Inn, "deferring the opening of a document, about which such particular injunctions were given so many years ago; but I don't suppose it can be of much consequence in this case. The money funded for accumulation has arrived at the total of nine hundred and seventy-three pounds sixteen shillings.'

"'Tis odd, Bob,' I remarked, 'so often as we have talked over this letter, and wondered what it contained, that, when the time comes,

we should let more than a fortnight elapse before gratifying our curiosity. I wonder you could wait for me.'

"'Ah!' said old Hugesson, 'you had no business, Mr. Tom, to go getting married at such a critical time; but I suppose I may break the seal, and read?'

"'Go ahead,' said Bob, 'and let's know what we are to do with this. Nine, seventy-three sixteen.'

"Old Hugesson opened the yellow-looking letter, adjusted his spectacles, and began:

'Saxilby, April 16th, 18—.

'To my Representatives:—

'Whereas I, your progenitor, Robert Wroughton, having, through my addiction to the turf, much impoverished Saxilby and the fortunes of my descendants, I am now anxious to make that which has absorbed so much of my own fortune, restore the same to my representatives. In order that this may be accomplished without risk to themselves, I have invested £200 in the funds to accumulate until eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and then

to be employed as herein directed. The whole to be then divided amongst my representatives direct, equally.

'Since I left the turf I have had numberless dreams connected with horse-racing. The result has in nearly every instance proved the truthfulness of the vision.

'For three successive nights I have dreamt that a horse little mentioned in the betting shall win the Derby in the year 1862. So impressed am I with the truth of this dream, that I desire the whole of the accumulation be invested on this horse's chance for the Derby in that year. On one point only have I any misgivings; I cannot for a certainty say which the name is of two. It is unlikely there will be two such similar names engaged in that Derby. If there are, half must be invested on each. The names are—

'Caradoc and Caractacus.

'Take heed whoever may open this that ye attend to my behest.

(Signed) 'Thomas Wroughton.'

"'Good Heavens!' said Bob, 'and *Caractacus won the Derby last Wednesday, starting at thirty to one!*'

"If ever you saw three fellows looking six ways for Sundays it was Bob, I, and old Hugesson. The Derby was over, though it was run late that year,—4th of June, you may recollect,—and my grandfather had dreamt to no purpose after all. My story is ended. I sailed for Australia on the 1st of July; and though I have made a bit of money, and done well, I have not yet got together what I should have won over Caractacus. And now I vote we have a quiet rubber."

"Gad! it was enough to bring the old gentleman out of his grave," said Norman Slade. "Did he ever appear to you or your brother?"

Wroughton shook his head.

"How the devil was it you never told me this before?" said Jim Ogilvie.

"Couldn't tell it would interest you; besides, it's a sort of story people will hardly believe true."

The Doctor gave a prolonged whistle, and hummed a bar or two of "Cease your Funning."

They sat down and cut for partners.

"That's a perfectly true story, Mr. Wroughton, I suppose," said the Doctor, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Every word of it," said Tom.

I don't know what the Doctor saw, or fancied he saw, in Tom's face; but he suddenly burst out into a roar of laughter. It was apparently catching, for the whole party followed suit, and broke out into a general guffaw.

"Dev'lish well told, anyhow," said Norman Slade. "You to play, Jim. I shan't forget your 'Grandfather's Codicil' in a hurry, Wroughton."

II.

A Courtship Catastrophe.

"But, my dear Jim, what are you to do?"

"Don't get gusty, Louisa. Isn't that just what we're going to talk over quietly?" And Jim Ogilvie lounged back in his easy-chair, puffing languidly at his cigar as if it was not a matter of much importance after all.

"But you say you're thoroughly ruined," said his sister.

"Fancy I'm about done this time. Wonder myself it didn't happen sooner. Might have taken place any time these five years. Rather curious I've lasted so long."

"And you'll have to sell out, you say?"

"Papers are in now, so you may consider that done. I've been economical, too, this season. Gone tick for everything except cabs. Never knew but one man who tried that. He used to take a hansom by the month; but he

only lasted one season, so I suppose it didn't answer."

"Don't be absurd. The question is,—What are you to do next?"

"Precisely. I am quite prepared to hear any views you may express on the subject; only let's discuss it calmly."

The speaker was as scapegrace a spendthrift as ever came to grief in the cavalry. For the last five years he had lived a precarious existence, dependent, in great measure, on his luck on the turf. He had now arrived at the grand climacteric. Luck had gone against him; his creditors were clamorous for payment; his debts numberless; his assets next to nothing. Jim Ogilvie felt that the fates had vanquished him. He accordingly made his arrangements for retirement, and had come down to pass a few days with his married sister, Louisa Baybraham, at the Firs, a pretty villa situated near Kingston, on the banks of the Thames.

A monstrous pleasant snuggery was the smoking-room at the Firs, the scene of the

above conversation. On an October evening, with the crimson curtains well drawn, a cheery fire burning in the grate, and the light of the lamp falling on the carved pipe-rack and picture of Teddington, that Derby winner of an Exhibition year, over the mantel-piece, it was quite possible, in pleasant company, to pass a couple of hours there with great satisfaction before retiring to bed. The lounging-chairs were the lowest and easiest conceivable. The book-shelves contained all sorts of delicacies, Fielding and Dickens, Goldsmith, Scott, Byron, and Ingoldsby; popular magazines bound up, and plenty of history for those who thirsted for sterner stuff. Some half-dozen prints decorated the walls, among which Frith's "Derby Day" and a comic representation of the First of September were prominent.

In this apartment at present were seated Ogilvie and his sister. Mr. Baybraham was away from home for a few days on a shooting expedition; and, their *tête-à-tête* dinner being over, Mrs. Baybraham, who had no prejudices

against tobacco, had joined her brother in the smoking-room with a view of talking over his somewhat critical situation.

A prettier, more piquante, sunny little woman than Mrs. Baybraham you don't often see. With her blue eyes, soft, fair, silken tresses, and fresh complexion, she did not look her age by some years. She had the neatest of figures and most fascinating of manners. As for dress, if Mrs. Baybraham did not understand the knack of making the most of her personal advantages, no woman ever did. She was as active, restless, intriguing a little bit of humanity as ever wore petticoat. Promoter of archery clubs, croquet clubs, inaugurator of balls and bazaars—she was perpetually scheming and canvassing with regard to something. She was very popular in her own neighbourhood. It was generally agreed, if you could but induce "the Lady of the Firs" to take a thing up, its success was assured. As for her big, jolly husband, he believed in her intensely, and she twisted him round her delicate fingers as easily as she did her tatting

silk. Match-making was one of her delights, and a more invaluable ally than Mrs. Baybraham despondent lover need hardly wish for. The parties she would make up, the audacious manner in which the shameless little schemer would throw together the two intended to become one, must have been seen to be believed.

The marrying of her brother judiciously, I need hardly observe, had for some years occupied the restless little lady; but Jim was incorrigible. "He goes off to his horrid racing," she would observe, plaintively, "when I've got four thousand a year, and good-looking, too, my dear, staying in the house expressly for him."

There was no doing anything for a man who declined to appear except as a photograph, and after a time she gave it over, piously trusting he might see the error of his ways before it was too late.

"Yes, I know," she would observe to her husband, "Jim will wait till he's fat and bald, and then expect me to manage it all for him,

and he'll want somebody nice besides. I've no patience with him. I'll do it then, you see if I don't; but he'll have to take a Gorgon, or somebody without any H's."

"Jim," said Mrs. Baybraham, sternly, "you've apparently 'done it' at last. I always knew you would. It's no use talking of how foolish you've been. I never do that; it's not my way. The question is,—What you're to do now? I know only one thing for you. Can you suggest anything for yourself?"

"Of course I can't; I thought you came here to suggest. No, Loo; the only thing I'm clear about is that the other side the Channel will suit me better than this before three months are over."

"Well, sir, I think I've a better idea for you than that. You must marry! There's one comfort, you're ruined before your good looks are gone. Oh, Jim! why didn't you attend to me the year before last, when I had Rosa Dainforth staying here on purpose for you? Such a nice-looking girl, and with

such lots of money! And now I really don't know what I'm to do for you. You've been too provoking."

"Well, I don't know what to say about matrimony; however, one may as well 'go in' for that as anything else. There's only one thing: if it don't come off in three months, you'll either have to bring her abroad, or I must try my luck with a foreign heiress."

"Don't talk nonsense. I don't believe in foreign heiresses for one thing, and your French is too bad to give you much chance with them for another. As for my coming abroad for any such purpose, it's absurd. No, you must marry, or, at all events, be engaged, before three months are over. Now, the question is, to whom? Go on with your cigar, and don't interrupt me. I must think a little." And Mrs. Baybraham knit her pretty brows, and looked very serious.

Jim smoked on in silence, and was speedily lost in speculations anent the coming "Cambridgeshire," and other Newmarket events.

"Yes," at last said his sister, "I see

nothing else for it. I can't help it, Jim. You'll have to marry the widow. She's not all I could wish; but there's no help for it. You've left me no time to look about in——"

"Well, I've no particular objection to a widow; but let's hear who she is, and a little about her looks, &c. I suppose she has dollars, or you wouldn't be so foolish as to suggest her?"

"Oh, yes, she has plenty of money! She's a little older than you; but she's a fine woman — not my style quite. She's large and dark, and hasn't much taste, I'm afraid, poor thing, for I found her tatting in blue silk once, with red ribbons in her hair. That don't do, Jim, you know," and the little lady shook her head quite solemnly over the enormity.

"What's her name? and if you'd be a little more definite about her age, I should like it better. I may as well know the worst."

"Her name's not pretty, but that don't matter; because you will change it for her— a point in your favour. She ought to be

glad to change such a name as Sculthorpe. As for her age—hem! I should think she was a year or two older than I am."

This was a delicate manœuvre to break the fact that the fair widow was some five or six and thirty.

"No, Sculthorpe's not harmonious. May I ask what the late lamented Sculthorpe was?"

"Oh dear, yes! he traded in sugars, rice, &c., a sort of grocer on a large scale—West Indian merchant, I think they call it; he died three years ago. Mrs. Sculthorpe has devoted all her energies since to get into society. That must be your *rôle*, Jim; talk peerage at her, and wonder she missed the duchess's *fête;* everybody there—that is, every one who is any one. Shocking bad style—horrible, I know; but it will be the shortest way with her."

"It's awful snobbish, but a very easy line to take up. I am afraid the Sculthorpe is rather a cad."

"No, no, Jim; rather weak on that point,

like most underbred people; but she'll be quite passable with a little drilling. I'll get a clever maid for her when you are once married, who will see she makes no glaring errors in dress. You must educate her as Mr. D'Israeli does the country gentlemen."

"Never educated anything but a retriever puppy; if one has patience for that, one has patience for anything. But when am I to see my goddess?"

"Next week we're going to stay at Lanceby with the Skeffingtons; Lady Skeffington is a great friend of mine. I shall write to say we are bringing you with us, and will take care to slip in, on some pretence, how anxious I am to meet Mrs. Sculthorpe again. She doesn't live far from Lanceby, and I know her ladyship will ask her, if I give a strong hint to that effect. As for the widow, she'll be only too pleased to stay at Lanceby. And now, Jim, good night. Ring if you haven't everything you want."

"Thanks. You're a very Talleyrand in petticoats. If the widow isn't something too

awful, I'll enter for her." And Jim handed his sister a candlestick.

"She's a very handsome woman, and you'll be a very lucky man," said Mrs. Baybraham, laughing as she nodded good night.

The morrow brought back Mr. Baybraham, a bluff, boisterous, good-tempered man, much addicted to field sports. He was very fond of his brother-in-law (Jim could both ride and shoot). Moreover, though he never betted, like many other men, Mr. Baybraham thoroughly enjoyed a good talk about racing. For all these reasons his brother-in-law stood high in his estimation.

"Bad business this, Jim; Loo tells me you're about broke, and mean to sell. Always thought you would be, you know."

"Yes, that's a great comfort; everybody seems to have thought so. I'm sure I have. Wouldn't have done to have disappointed the public much longer. They've been wondering, in an aggrieved sort of way, 'Why the devil don't he go?' these last three years."

"Well, I'm awful sorry for you. I'd lend a

hand, you know; but I suppose it's too big a scrape for me to be of any use, isn't it?"

"A thousand thanks, yes. I knew, old fellow, you'd give me a lift if it was any good; but it isn't. I always made up my mind when my time came, as I knew it would, not to bother my friends uselessly."

"Can't be helped, then. We'll waste no more time talking about it. So you're going in for the widow, hey? She's a fine woman and has lumps of money. Best thing you can do, Loo says, and she's always right. Nice house, Lanceby. Good old chap, Sir Skeff; and as for my lady, she's the best-hearted woman—bar my wife—ever breathed. Very good food, very good liquor, and the shooting tidy. Only one drawback. Sir Skeff hates tobacco, and there's no smoking-room. Case of total abstinence, Jim."

"Isn't there the kitchen, servants' hall, or something?"

"Don't know. The only time I ever smoked there was once when I went without Loo to shoot. It's a gabled house, and I got

out of my window between two gables, and had a cigar in the gutter *al fresco*. Deuced near got stuck in the window coming back. You see, I'm a size or two too large for such games," and Baybraham burst into a jolly laugh at the recollection.

"Nobody hardly to meet you, dear," said Lady Skeffington, as she welcomed Mrs. Baybraham on their arrival at Lanceby. "Only Mrs. Sculthorpe, her niece, Dora Paine, and old Mr. Dobbs. I don't know whether you've met him before, but he's an old City friend of John's." The Skeffingtons, I must premise, had made their money in that great Golconda round Cannon Street, and Sir John's baronetcy was no old hereditary dignity, but conferred upon him for something that took place while he was Lord Mayor. Whether a Prince was born or wedded, I forget now; but some such auspicious event occurred in the year of his mayoralty.

Jim descended from his room with considerable curiosity to see the woman whom destiny in the shape of his debts and his sister called

upon him to marry. He was a little late entering the drawing-room, and found the whole party assembled. No mistake about the widow; there she was, a tall, handsome woman, with bold black eyes, dressed in maize-coloured silk. Eyes that palpably challenged conversation and admiration, and that to an astute observer equally said, "And if you like to flirt with me a little, I shan't mind it."

"Straightforward, easy-going that," thought Jim; "and that's the niece, I suppose—that shy, shrinking little thing in white with cherry-coloured ribbons?"

Dora Paine was a slight little thing, not exactly pretty, and yet you wondered why, and could not help looking at her again to see if you were not mistaken. She had a profusion of mouse-coloured hair, and a most lustrous pair of grey eyes when you could but catch a glimpse of them, but she was apparently so shy there was no getting her to look at you. Her features were far from regular, though she had a pretty yet slightly large mouth, which

disclosed beautiful teeth when she ventured to smile. Still, on the rare occasions when the face lit up and the eyes were uplifted, people were rather taken aback upon finding what a pretty girl Miss Paine was; but it died away so rapidly, that in a few minutes more they began to think they had been mistaken, and that she was but a nice little thing after all.

It fell to Jim Ogilvie's lot to take Miss Paine in to dinner, and he rattled on with all the gay *insouciance* of a man of the world; but before the end of dinner Jim was quite bewildered. It was something so different from anything he had before experienced. The shy monosyllabic answers—the way the face flashed up for a moment at his sallies, and then died away again, as if half frightened at its temerity—the half burst of lively reply so abruptly checked, puzzled him. He couldn't understand it. He couldn't comprehend any one being so soft, shy, and timid as Dora Paine. It melted him to pity, and he was as kind and gentle with her before the ladies retired as if

she had been a child. I am afraid he rather forgot the magnificent widow opposite, and devoted himself with considerable assiduity and success to calming the nerves of his fluttered little neighbour.

On adjournment to the drawing-room, however, he became at once alive to his duty. After casting one lingering glance at Dora Paine, who had established herself with a book at some little distance from the other ladies, he dropped into a chair next the widow, and plunged into a lively conversation. Bearing his sister's advice in mind, he enlarged a good deal upon London life and the fashionable world, and before the bed-room candles were brought into requisition had established a sort of easy flirtation with Mrs. Sculthorpe, who wished him good night with great cordiality.

"Good boy," murmured Mrs. Baybraham, as she passed her brother. "It will be your own fault if you don't succeed."

"Of course you'll both shoot to-morrow?" said Sir John. "What'll you do, Dobbs? come and look at us about luncheon time as usual?"

"Yes. I like to read the paper in the morning, and it's no use my taking a gun. I never hurt anything but myself. I'm sure my shoulder was black for a week afterwards the last time I tried."

"No baccy to-night, Jim, unless you can get out on the roof with a great coat," chuckled Baybraham, as they went upstairs.

Jim took a turn or two up and down his room, thought a bit of how his attack had gone on on the widow. "Yes, I've done pretty well so far," he muttered. "I've astonished her a good deal, that's something, and pleased her, that's something more." Then he began to think of Dora Paine once more. "Pooh, bosh!" he muttered; "what's the frightened little chit to me? Hang it, I must have a cigar!" and he opened the window—"that won't do; only a thirty-foot drop into the courtyard outside there. I'll put on a smoking-jacket and explore. Must be some place to do a weed amongst the servants' diggings. What a fool I was not to ask the butler; I was so

busy making play with Mrs. Sculthorpe I forgot all about it."

Candle in hand and cigar-case in pocket, Jim issued from his room and descended to the hall. Now, he thought, which of these doors leads to the offices? After one or two mistakes he found himself in a long stone passage. "Looks *kitcheny* this," he muttered, when suddenly a half-opened door on his right disclosed a fire, which, though low, was still burning. Jim peeped in; the room was empty. This'll do; wonder what the deuce they use it for? and without further consideration he lit his cigar, drew up a chair, and began to smoke tranquilly in front of the fire. His meditations were not pleasant. I don't think they often are in those solitary smokes. His debts, duns, and the widow kept whirling through his brain. He couldn't help thinking that for choice he'd rather not marry "the Sculthorpe," as far as he'd seen of her. Bit of a cad, and uses those big black eyes of hers more than's quite the thing. Fine woman, but a little older than Loo put her at, I should say. One comfort,

it's all plain galloping. Can't make the running too strong, I should think. Sort of woman one can have it all over with one way or the other in a week. Think I'd back myself. Wonder what she has got? Must ask Loo to-morrow. I can't afford any mistakes—jointure ceasing on her marrying again, or anything of that kind; however, Loo's not a likely woman to make a mistake. Then his shy companion of the dinner-table came into his head again, and with an impatient psha! he threw the remnant of his cigar into the fire, and decided he'd go to bed.

Leisurely ascending the stairs, Jim opened the door into the gallery off which his room was, and in so doing nearly knocked down Miss Paine. She uttered a slight exclamation, and shrank back.

"For goodness' sake don't scream!" said Jim; "it's only me. I've been among the cellars in pursuit of a quiet cigar. Sir John's so behind the age, there's no smoking-room in the house."

"Oh dear, Mr. Ogilvie, how you frightened

me! Don't; I can't speak for a minute. I never thought I should meet any one," she gasped.

"Awfully sorry to cause you any alarm, I'm sure. All Sir John's fault for not having a decent smoking-room like any other Christian."

"Oh, I'm so ashamed—dressed like this, too!" and the grey eyes looked up for a minute, and then Miss Paine blushed beautifully.

"By Jove! she *is* pretty," thought Jim.

She had on a most becoming white dressing-robe, trimmed with blue, and her hair, of which she had quantities, hung down to her waist.

"Nonsense," said Jim; "we can't throw stones at each other on that point," and he glanced at his own smoking-jacket. "Ladies always think of 'the becoming' and I'm sure Miss Paine never looked better in her life."

"Oh don't, please! You mustn't say such things. I've just been over to my aunt's room; she likes me to read to her at night some-

times. I never thought I should meet any one. It's too bad of her in a strange house—keeping me up so late, too, when she knows I'm so fond of getting up early."

"Are you so fond of early rising?"

"Oh yes! I do so love the freshness of the morning. I am always out before eight. I so — but I must go — good night, Mr. Ogilvie."

"Good night!—but won't you shake hands?"

Dora Paine put out a little white hand, and for a second the grey eyes flashed up at Jim.

"Don't tell my aunt, please, you met me! She'd scold so. I'm always so unlucky about getting into scrapes," she faltered out, as Jim detained the little *patte* a second or so more than was absolutely necessary.

"A lady's secret is always sacred," said Jim, as he opened the door for her, and Dora Paine glided away.

"She's devilish pretty," muttered Jim as he entered his own bedroom. "What eyes she has when she lets you see them! Don't think

she's quite so shy either, when you come to talk to her. I've a deuced good mind to—what's more, I'm blessed if I won't." And with this half-formed resolution Jim sought his pillow.

What thoughts ran through Dora Paine's little head that night I cannot say. I only know that after regaining her room she looked at herself for some minutes in the glass with a self-satisfied smile, and finally murmured, with a light laugh, "I wonder if he will?"

The morrow's morn was rife with surprises at Lanceby.

"Most extraordinary!" said Sir John, as he advanced towards the completion of his toilet a little after nine. "Can't think what makes my dressing-room smell so of tobacco."

On entering the breakfast-room, the worthy baronet's astonishment knew no bounds. "Hang it, it's all over the house! the staircase smelt like a cigar divan, and so does this room. Good morning, Dobbs, how are you?" inquired the baronet. "Confound it! why, you smell of tobacco, too. You don't mean to say it's

you that have been smoking all over the house?"

"Good gracious! no. I never smoke—detest the smell of tobacco," said that gentleman, who was busy over his letters; "but my room smelt slightly of tobacco this morning, I thought, and I'm sure you do——"

"Gad, you're right, I do!" said the baronet, sniffing at his coat-sleeve. "It's my clothes, by jingo!"

"It's very odd—very odd," said Dobbs, taking similar cognisance of his coat-sleeve. "Bah! I'm reeking of tobacco."

At this juncture, Lady Skeffington, the widow, and her niece entered the room.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Sculthorpe. "Dear me, I thought you didn't like it. Fie, Sir John, indulging before breakfast!"

"My goodness, Mr. Dobbs," cried her ladyship, "why you've been smoking too!"

"My dear Lady Skeffington, I assure you, unless I did it in my sleep, I never touched a cigar in my life," said Dobbs, with great earnestness.

An amused smile flickered round Miss Paine's mouth. She was looking very well this morning:

> "Myrtilla, early on the lawn,
> Steals roses from the blushing dawn;"

and we know that Dora was on intimate terms with Aurora.

In came the urn, rolls, eggs, &c., closely followed by Mrs. Baybraham and her brother.

"Had your cigar, Ogilvie?" said Sir John, after the accustomed salutations.

"Cigar!" said Jim, with a face of blank astonishment.

"Yes; I thought inveterate smokers like you began the first thing."

"Never smoke in bed myself," replied Jim. "Don't know any one that does. Hot ashes in your shirt and all that sort of thing."

The baronet looked incredulous, sidled up to Ogilvie, and sniffed round him like a pointer. Jim's neat shooting-jacket was innocent of the noxious vapour.

"Must be Baybraham, by Jove!" thought

Sir John. "Your husband not in yet, Mrs. Baybraham?"

"Not in!" laughed Louisa. "Not out of his dressing-room, you mean. Who ever heard of Robert out before breakfast?"

The baronet knocked the top off an egg viciously. "D—d odd," he muttered. "Can't be the chimneys—never knew the gardener smoke the conservatory at this time of year before. Doesn't make my coat smell when he does." And then he glanced suspiciously once more at Jim Ogilvie.

That gentleman, utterly unconscious, was absorbed in attentions to and conversation with Mrs. Sculthorpe. The widow's black eyes were making play as fast as Jim's tongue. Breakfast, altogether, went off pleasantly. Two people only looked a little *distrait*. Sir John was evidently troubled with the tobacco question; Dora Paine also seemed a little fidgety about something; but one never can tell what it is disturbs your shy people.

Baybraham was very late in appearing. Sir John sniffed round him suspiciously, to Jim

Ogilvie's intense amusement, but in this case refrained

"From accusation vast and vague,"

and the party broke up.

But another and more humble individual, who could easily have solved the question that so oppressed Sir John, had also been surprised, though in a different way, that morning. This was no other than Jim Ogilvie's valet, who, upon entering his master's room with his accustomed cup of tea, had, to his utter bewilderment, found it empty.

"Whatever is he up to?" soliloquized the valet. "Never knew him get up for anything, unless it was duty, and we've done with that; or maybe a prize fight. No, can't be that, or I'd have had my orders. This is a rum 'un, this is. However, 'Hold your tongue, and don't be surprised at anything,' them's the first orders ever he give me; so I suppose that's 'the thing' now." And Mr. Thomas Ritson quietly made the usual preparations for his master's toilet.

The partridges had a bad time of it that afternoon. Jim and Baybraham generally shot pretty straight, and Sir John was more than respectable. They were strolling home; the baronet had lingered behind a little to confer with his keeper.

"I say, Jim, what is all this joke about the tobacco smoke?" inquired Baybraham. "Loo told me something about it just before we started, and said she was sure you were at the bottom of it. You looked so supernaturally innocent."

"Why, I went off on a cruise last night, looking for a quiet place to 'do a weed' amongst the offices. Found what I thought a snug room with a fire, and had it quite comfortable. Seems, from what Ritson tells me, I got into the brushing-room where all the clothes were laid out, and flavoured them uncommon. You and I, as luck would have it, came down in our shooting togs, or we should have been as high-scented as Sir John."

"Lord, what a lark!" chuckled Baybraham. "Wonder the butler didn't split."

"Tipped him a sovereign this morning, and told him I'd no doubt he could no more account for the tobacco than I; but he thinks I'd better smoke in the kitchen to-night."

I doubt, all things considered, whether this evening's dinner went off quite so well as the previous one. Miss Paine was certainly getting over her shyness a little. Ogilvie was undoubtedly most praiseworthy in his efforts to set her at her ease; but his exertions hardly seemed to meet the approbation of his sister. The widow's brow darkened and her black eyes seemed charged with lightning. Still, in the drawing-room affairs wore a more satisfactory aspect. Jim was again all devotion, the widow's brow cleared, and her face was once more wreathed in smiles.

"So you like this neighbourhood? I doubt whether I should; one should always live within a drive of town; however, I dare say it does as a temporary arrangement."

"Why should it be temporary? I intend to live here always."

"Now, my dear Mrs. Sculthorpe, don't be

absurd. Ladies of your attractions and the right side of thirty never can tell what will become of them. You may think—I dare say do (I'm afraid you're heartless enough for anything)—that nothing will ever induce you to change your state—that 'you'll be deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.'"

"Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Ogilvie. I shan't listen to you if you do," simpered the widow, looking extremely pleased all the same.

"I'm afraid not," said the unabashed Jim; "but for all that you will meet your destiny before very long. It's no use looking angry (she was not doing so in the least). You will think of me then. Suppose your destiny now be a man fond of London and the London world. Wouldn't you make a sacrifice for him? No, you think not. Ah, Mrs. Sculthorpe, when the right man comes you'll be no sterner than the rest of your sex."

Mrs. Baybraham was looking on most approvingly. Could she have overheard the conversation, she would certainly not have

accused her brother of wasting time. Now, when things were progressing so favourably, what malignant spirit could have put it into Sir John's head to ask for a little music? The request seemed harmless enough, and in the first instance, while Mrs. Baybraham sang two or three French *chansons*, seemed fraught with little danger; but when Miss Paine succeeded her and began warbling out old English ballads in a tremulous contralto, Jim Ogilvie first got fidgety and *distrait*, and finally, quitting the widow rather abruptly, devoted himself to the piano.

Miss Paine sang ballads well. She had a sweet voice, and sang with fire and spirit—*verve* expresses it, perhaps, almost better. It struck you all the more, as from such a timid, shrinking little thing you were not prepared to expect it. You had hardly got over the pathos with which she rendered "'Twas when the seas were roaring," before you were startled by the fire with which she gave that grand old air, "The Men of Haerlech." She seemed entirely to forget

her shyness the minute she found her fingers on the piano. She was wont to say "that she thought singing was the only thing she was not nervous about before strangers, and the reason is, I'm so fond of music I forget all about them when I begin to play." The girl's face, too, lit up under the inspiration of the music, and nobody who had watched Miss Paine while singing had any doubt that she was a very pretty girl.

Jim had already arrived at that conclusion, and saw no reason at all to change his opinion. He kept turning over the leaves, and suggesting song after song. The shyest of maidens must look up occasionally under these circumstances. Jim thought but little of the widow's black eyes as he looked down into Dora Paine's grey ones. But it was hardly to be supposed that Mrs. Baybraham was to look quietly on at this sort of thing. After devoting herself to the widow for some little time, during which she had delicately insinuated her brother's good qualities with an address which only those who have been indebted

to it can comprehend, she arrived at the conclusion that it was high time she interfered.

She rose and crossed the room to the piano.

"What a delicious thing, Miss Paine! Do let me look at it! Ah! I see that sweet old ballad of Percy's! How prettily you sing this style of music—so difficult to do well too! I don't think I ever heard any one who could sing ballads so sweetly! but we must consider you a little. As for my brother there, he will show you no mercy, but keep you singing all night."

"Indeed, Mrs. Baybraham, it does not tire me. I love these old songs so, I never know when to stop. I am so glad you like them; I don't think many people do."

"My dear," said Mrs. Baybraham, for a minute forgetting her *rôle*, and surprised into sudden enthusiasm, "never think that. When sung as you sing them, people would rather listen to those ballads than any amount of Italian music or French *chansons*. We can hear *all that* by paying for it; but the other is a gift, and a rare one."

"By Jove you're right, Loo! I've yawned many a time at Covent Garden."

"Oh! you, sir, are capable of any atrocity. Do get me my handkerchief; I left it over by Mrs. Sculthorpe."

Ogilvie stepped across for the missing *mouchoir*, but returned immediately. His sister's eye followed him; as he returned she met him.

"Jim, my dear," she whispered, "you're making a fool of yourself," and then quietly resumed her place by the widow's side.

Jim looked staggered; but he was saved all further temptation, as Dora closed the piano and joined the circle. The conversation became general till the candlesticks were called into requisition. Still the incorrigible Jim could not resist handing Dora her *bougie* and saying, in a low tone:

"Good night, Miss Paine. I trust you will rise early, and gather fresh roses for the morrow."

"Oh no!—I don't know—perhaps—yes!" replied Dora, in a shy whisper; and the grey

eyes were raised to Jim's for a second, and then withdrawn in the most charming confusion, slightly increased as she gave her little hand to Jim, with a "Good night, Mr. Ogilvie!"

About eight the next morning the door of Ogilvie's room opened quietly, and that gentleman leisurely descended the staircase, opened the hall door, and wended his way to the garden. He kept very close under the house, so that he could have been with difficulty seen from any of the first-floor windows that looked out that way. Descending the steps of the terrace, and turning up an old horse-chestnut avenue, he walked slowly along till he arrived at the top. Here he paused; and was wrapped, apparently, in admiration of the bright October sun just gilding the tops of the fine old trees, and flashing down upon the dappled coats of the deer as they nibbled the dew-sprinkled herbage. He had not to wait long before he caught a glimpse of a light dress in the avenue he had just quitted. Jim turned quickly to meet it.

"Good morning, Miss Paine; I am down before you, you see. You little thought I was given to early rising."

"No, or I shouldn't have come here. I must not again. It's very wrong, Mr. Ogilvie; people will say all sorts of things—that we've met here on purpose——"

It did look a little like it.

"I told you yesterday that I thought this the best part of the day."

"Yes; but I thought you were laughing at me. I didn't suppose——"

"No, how should you? Let's walk up to the top here; there's such a view over the park. I was so afraid you wouldn't come, Dora. I may call you Dora, mayn't I?"

"No; it's not right. I can't help what you call me; but you know you shouldn't."

"But what is the use of having a pretty name if you are not to be called by it?"

"Don't you think Miss Paine sounds nice?"

"Not so pretty as Dora. I never half thanked you for your singing last night."

"Oh, I got so scolded for it afterwards! Aunt said I had made myself conspicuous, and had tried to monopolise the company. I'm only to sing one song, or two at the most, in future, and I do so love singing." And the artless Dora raised her eyes to Jim's in a most piteous way.

"What a confounded shame! What an old harridan your aunt is, my darling!"

"I thought you liked her. I'm sure you are very attentive to her," said Miss Paine, raising her eyebrows with the prettiest little air of astonishment imaginable.

"Oh, nonsense! One must be civil to people, you know. Ladies expect a good deal of attention. I'm sure I'd rather have sat by you at the piano a good deal."

"Oh, Mr. Ogilvie, don't tell stories!"

"I'm not telling stories; you know I would. I did afterwards."

"Till Mrs. Baybraham fetched you away."

"Deuce take the girl!" thought Jim; 'she may be shy, but she can see apparently. Let's sit down on this bench."

"Yes. What did Mrs. Baybraham fetch you away for?"

Jim glanced suspiciously at his companion, but the downcast lids defied scrutiny. "I don't know. I forget now; some trifling nonsense or another."

"No, it was not; tell me what it was."

"I will. She thought I was getting lost in admiration of you."

"But you were not. You liked my singing, that was all. She did herself; but I don't think she wanted me to sing any more," added the girl, reflectively.

"But suppose I was admiring you, more than your singing."

Dora lifted her eyes to his face for a moment and her own flushed as she replied in a low voice, "I don't think you were; you admire my aunt."

"My dear Dora, I admire you ten thousand times more than your aunt. Won't you believe me?" and Jim possessed himself of the little white hand next him.

"Dora, I think you had better go in to

breakfast," said a voice behind them ; and Mrs. Sculthorpe glided from behind the shrubs that shrouded the bench.

Dora uttered a slight scream, turned scarlet, and then with downcast eyes hurried towards the house.

For a few seconds Jim was staggered ; then his accustomed *hardiesse* returned.

"Ah, Mrs. Sculthorpe," he said, joining that lady, "I thought Miss Paine and myself were the only votaries of Aurora at Lanceby. Have you been out long? Charming morning, isn't it?"

"I have no doubt you found it so." And the widow's eyes flashed lightning of the real violet hue upon the offender.

"Yes, there's a freshness about this time of the day you never get afterwards."

"Refreshed you and Dora wonderfully, I dare say. Most refreshing piece of innocence altogether, isn't she?"

"I confess I don't understand you, Mrs. Sculthorpe."

"Early rising does not sharpen your wits,

Mr. Ogilvie. Not so quick as I thought you. Shall I tell you another thing? You'll hardly believe it, perhaps; but you don't *quite* understand Miss Paine."

"Don't profess to; more than that she's a very charming girl, who sings deliciously. You're fortunate in your niece."

"Very," said the widow, drily. "You've a little more to learn about her; but as we've got back to the house, I think I shall go in to breakfast."

"Yes, I suppose it's about time," said Jim looking at his watch.

"One word of advice, Mr. Ogilvie, before we part. The next time you make an appointment don't do it in quite such audible tones. Speaking loud is always vulgar, particularly so on such occasions." And with this last salvo the widow swept triumphantly indoors.

Jim gave a low whistle as Mrs. Sculthorpe left him. "Well, I have done it this time; fancy her ears being so quick. Sooner I'm off the better. One of my letters this morning must contain an urgent summons to town.

Won't face Louisa, and I'll tell Baybraham the widow refused me. Am sure she would if I'd asked her. Wonder how much she overheard behind those laurels."

Jim ran up to his room and rang the bell.

"Have something to meet the rail, Ritson," he said, as that trusty servitor appeared, "about five or six, and be ready to start."

"Where to, sir?"

"How should I know? Look in Bradshaw. Anywhere will do, bar London. Pick out a train that goes about that time."

Breakfast went off rather flat that morning. Mrs. Baybraham's quick eyes saw that something was amiss, but Jim gave her no chance of an explanation. He returned from shooting only just in time to change his dress, said good-bye all round hurriedly, whispered to his sister, "All up! Robert will tell you everything," and was gone.

"A note for you, sir," said Ritson, as his master stepped into the carriage.

Jim opened it as they drove off; he had not seen Miss Paine since breakfast.

"My aunt is so angry. I am in sad disgrace (all your fault), and am to be sent home immediately to 44, The Terrace, Putney. You should have the song you liked so, if I knew where to send it. Good-bye!

"Yours, Dora."

"Gad," said Jim, after a minute's thought, "the widow's right; I don't think I do *quite* understand Dora Paine."

"Don't tell me, Robert; he never proposed to Mrs. Sculthorpe," said Mrs. Baybraham, as they drove home the next day. "Of all the designing little flirts I ever saw that Paine's girl is the worst, and of all the egregious fools I ever met, I think Jim's about the biggest. Oh dear! oh dear! What *is* he to do?"

III.

KISSED BY MISTAKE.

A LONG straggling street, on which the hot June sun pours down with unmitigated power. A few working men in blouses and clattering sabôts lounge languidly down it at intervals. Marie and Louise, of the Hôtel de Londres, stand simmering and perspiring at the door of that hostelrie, snatching a few moments' rest from their multifarious avocations, comprising a mixture of parlour, chambermaid, boots, and porter—for they work in a manner known only to the female servants of Normandy. The members of the French *Cercle* opposite are consoling themselves in their balcony with *eau sucre* and cigarettes.

Nothing breaks the silence but the hideous cracking of the carters' whips, as some heavily-laden wagon wends its way through the dusty street, drawn by horses, that still

remind one of the old pictures of the Conqueror and his knights, in their powerful mould and utter lack of breeding. Why do these Norman carters so persistently disturb the *dolce far niente* of the scene with the crack of their atrocious whips and shrill "Youps?" The horses know better than to notice them. Do they want Marie or Louise to look forth on them from door or window? I think so, or why *do* they do it? The fat little barber opposite, sweltering in his shirt sleeves, looks as if "cutting and shampooing" at a franc really is not worth the expenditure of labour on such an afternoon, and is idling it away—playing with his pretty little daughter and a bird, a tame hippoo, that hops in and out over the shop threshold.

Mademoiselle Trincon, prettiest of grisettes, plies her needle lazily, and wonders whether the good-looking Englishman who passes such pretty compliments in such atrocious French will come across from his lodgings, over the tobacconist's, to know if his handkerchiefs

are yet hemmed. They have been some time in hand, but neither she nor he seem to think time of much consequence in this case. Nobody does seem to think time of much account in Avranches. She muses a little over the good-looking proprietress of the cigar shop and lodgings. Though Madame *de Tabac* hath a husband, Mademoiselle Trincon has seen a little too much of life to think that altogether a safeguard against such a volatile admirer as "he of the handkerchiefs." Her mind is a little troubled at this, so she languidly gets through a few more stitches, and wonders whether she shall see him in the *Jardin* to-night.

Madame the tobacconist troubles her head little about her lodger beyond making him pay severely for fusees, cigars, and accommodation. She takes his francs and compliments with the brightest of smiles, and dismisses any expostulation with such a charming shrug of her pretty shoulders, that it makes argument impossible. I think I prefer her on the whole to the English landlady,

who treats you with scorn and reprobation, mulcting you after all far heavier of your gold.

Lounging out of the fair tobacconist's front-floor window is Jim Ogilvie, whilome of Her Majesty's Dragoons. Like many other men, he has lived a little too fast. Betting, gambling, and a general capacity for spending money have deprived the ——th of a promising officer, and sent him to do penance in a small French country town till some arrangements can be made with his numerous creditors. Jim leaves this with his accustomed *sang froid* to his friends. Gifted with the most elastic of dispositions, he frets little over his reverses. This new life amuses him. The rough cooking at the Londres and the light Bordeaux is a change to a man whose spirit is oppressed with the memories of club dinners, of Greenwich with its "bait" and dry champagne, or the elaborate mess of a cavalry corps. "All in the day's work" is his pet phrase, and the *table d'hôte* at the Londres is sometimes great fun.

The day they gave him periwinkles, and sent Louise round afterwards with a wine-glass filled with pins, as they hand you tooth-picks at a West End club, moved him to much mirth. Then, the continuous ever-changing stream of people there tickled him immensely. Was there not the sporting grocer with whom he exchanged turfy converse by the aid of broken French and pantomime, but whose sole idea was Gladiateur?

C'est un cheval magnifique—c'est un grand cheval—oui, c'est bon—he you beat. We beat you all overze again *toujours. C'est un beau, un bon un grand cheval Gladiateur. À votre santé, Monsieur.*

"Confound it!" he muttered, as he threw away his cigar; "this 'over the water' is becoming a bore. I must either 'go in' for absinthe or a small flirtation with 'Trincon.' Can't afford it with mine hostess. She'll stick me for something if I go through the shop. Hah! the dinner-bell of the Londres. Good! that solves the problem! Wash one's hands, and then to the caravansérai."

Jim entered the Londres. The motley gathering was composed as usual of French, who were mostly small government *employés*, and of the travelling English. Neither French ladies nor English residents ever much affected the Londres. The table, during the hot summer weather, was laid in the garden at the back of the house—a considerable improvement on the hot stuffy *salle*. Jim dropped into his accustomed seat next some English ladies, with whom, in consequence of their having resided at the hotel some weeks, he had scraped acquaintance, and began his dinner. Opposite were five places evidently taken, the chairs being tilted forward against the table.

"New comers, I suppose?" remarked Jim to his fair neighbour.

"Looks like it," she rejoined. "You were right, Mr. Ogilvie, the night before last, when you guessed that that gentleman and lady were a bridal couple on their honeymoon. I hear it is so."

"Oh! no mistake about it," said Jim.

"Your ideas of devotion must be *exigeante* in the extreme, or you would have seen it at once."

At this moment entered the party for whom the reserved seats were evidently in waiting.

A stout, florid man of fifty or thereabouts, accompanied by his wife, hale and comfortable-looking; a couple of daughters, apparently of the respective ages of seventeen and fifteen; and a young lady of rather more mature age, dressed in half-mourning.

There was nothing much in such a party taking their seats to influence Jim Ogilvie, one would have thought; but the claret glass was arrested half-way to his lips, and a muttered "Good gracious!" escaped him.

"What's the matter?" said his neighbour. "Has the incursion opposite frightened you?"

"No. Oh dear, no! I thought I recognised the old gentleman opposite."

"Not often the recognition of a gentleman causes so much confusion," replied his fair friend, laughing. "What do you take him for?"

"Oh! no doubt about him," replied Jim. "Made a lot of money in trade, somehow.

Travelling with wife and daughters, to polish the latter. Hates claret, the life, the whole thing. Yearning for port, and to see his 'Times' regular. Old lady much of his opinion—hates kickshaws and 'furren ways.' Daughters missy, Clapham educated, full of airs and vulgarism. That's about a correct description of the family, I take it."

"But you are leaving out one," said the young lady; "that nice-looking girl in half-mourning. What is she? niece, daughter, or governess?"

"Beat there quite, Miss Leslie. Don't affect to understand her."

"Well, it's time for us to go. You shall give me your views of that lady in half-mourning when you have had a little more leisure to study her." And Miss Leslie and her party rose, and left the table.

"Deuced odd," muttered Jim, as the ladies departed. "If that wasn't Dora Paine, I never saw her. What on earth is she doing here? Wonderful hot weather we're having, sir?"

"Yes," replied the florid gentleman opposite, whose feminine belongings had also retired. "Suppose it's always the case in this confounded country; but my misses they would come abroad. As for me, I think there's no place like England. Never was out of it before and wish I wasn't now."

"Well, I like a man with no prejudice about him," thought Jim. "Quite right," he said; "there's no place like it. These people don't know how to dine, spite of all they tell us about French cooking."

The cookery at the Londres was perhaps hardly a fair sample.

"You're right, sir—you're right," responded the florid-looking gentleman. "You're a sensible man, sir. No; I like my sirloin of beef and bottle of port afterwards. Confound this wishy-washy claret and the kickshaws I've been living on the last six weeks! But the girls bullied their mother to come abroad, and she teased me into it—more fool I, at my time of life."

"Try a *petit verre* with that coffee, and one

of these cigars," said Jim; "it's the best part of a Norman dinner." And he threw his case across the table.

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye," said the other; and in five minutes he and Jim were chatting together like old friends.

The cigars finished, they strolled up the garden, and Jim was introduced to Mrs. and the Misses Chalmers and Miss Paine. Jim bowed.

"Had the pleasure of meeting you last year at Lanceby, though I'm afraid my name has faded from your memory, Miss Paine," said Jim.

"No, Mr. Ogilvie, I recollect you perfectly," replied Miss Paine, somewhat drily.

Considering what had then passed between those two, it would have been odd if she hadn't.

Jim's easy, off-hand manner and man-of-the-world converse made a rapid impression. He listened patiently to Mrs. Chalmers' petty grievances, put down the eldest girl's Clapham graces with a high hand, and snubbed the

hoyden sharply in a London drawl of some years' practice.

Miss Paine looked on the while with a faint amused smile. It was only as they strolled back that Jim could contrive for a minute to get a word or two with her.

"Dora," he said, "what does all this mean? What are you doing here? Do you forget our last meeting?"

"I should have thought *you* had. You took little trouble to discover me after the scrape you led me into last year."

"My dear Dora, I had scrapes enough of my own on hand then. It was all I could do to take care of myself."

"Yes; I could fancy after the manner of men that would be your first object. You don't, as a rule, trouble your heads much about what position you leave us in."

"Don't be unkind; I can explain all when I have an opportunity. What are you doing here?"

"Can't you conceive? I am governess to those girls. A little troublesome, but not bad

girls in their way. The eldest is rather pretty. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know. I want to talk to you."

"Hush! Mrs. Chalmers is looking round. You liked early rising once. To-morrow morning, at eight, I will tell you all. I don't know this place. Say where, and I'll find it."

"The Jardin d'Évêques," whispered Jim. "You're quite right, Mrs. Chalmers; it is getting too late to stay out. I'm afraid I must wish you good night;" and, lifting his hat, Jim departed.

"By Jove!" he soliloquised, as he solaced himself shortly after with a pipe and a glass of Schiedam and water in his lodgings over the tobacconist's. "I had better go away. If I stay I know I shall get spooney on that little Paine girl. She led me into playing the fool once before. Lord, what a wife I might have had!" and Jim laughed at the recollection of a time now gone by—an occasion on which Dora had seduced him from his allegiance to a lady with ingots, whatever else she might lack.

And then Jim Ogilvie put down his pipe, and sought his pillow.

A few minutes before eight the next morning Miss Paine trips lightly out of the door of the Londres, rather to the astonishment of Marie, who thinks she's out earlier than most English. She stops for a moment to ask Marie the way to the Jardin d'Évêques. Marie directs her, and thinks she is making a species of mild pilgrimage to "the stones." For be it known, at the top of the Jardin d'Évêques, enclosed by posts and iron chains, are placed the identical flags taken from the old Cathedral of Avranches on which Henry the Second knelt to do penance for the murder of Thomas à Becket. Marie is a believer in bones and stones. She puts down Mademoiselle as a *devote Anglaise*, and thinks better of her accordingly.

Miss Paine trips quietly down the street, glances a minute or two at the busy market-place, where buxom Norman hucksters, adorned with the old Norman cap, long pendulous earrings, and those quaint old-fashioned gold

crosses (family heir-looms of perhaps some hundred years), are busily chaffering over their swelling baskets of ripe mellow fruit, and sees what she guesses to be the Jardin d'Évêques before her.

Miss Paine guesses aright, and, crossing the large open space at the top, is soon promenading the broad walk leading up to the penance-worn stones of the Plantagenet.

She had not walked far before Jim Ogilvie met her.

"Thanks, my dear Dora, for this meeting!" he exclaimed. "Come up above here. There is such a glorious view over the bay and country. You will see Mont St. Michel standing forth in all his glory this morning."

They ascended the little hillock in silence. To say the truth, perhaps both were a little puzzled as to how to begin. That there had been love passages between those two is obvious. But they had not met for some months, and picking up "the dropped stitches" on such occasions is sometimes awkward. The lady had a good deal the best of it. You see

it was for Jim to take the initiative. A waiting race is always easier than forcing the running. As for Jim, he knew he was doing something foolish; but then his life had been passed in perpetrating follies, and Avranches was getting so dull.

As they reached the summit the girl stopped, entranced. She had an eye for beauty in any form—beauties of nature or beauties of art. The fresh June sun poured down over the glittering bay with its wooded banks, up the long, straight, dusty road, so thoroughly French in its apparently interminable length and directness. While far away, still half-enveloped in mist, towered out that mystic Mont St. Michel, of which she had heard so much—as Pagan idol of the Romans, monastery and shrine of the Middle Ages, bastile of the Revolution. Like some grim old-world monster, it looked out over the waters of the bay.

Jim saw she was spell-bound, and for some few minutes forbore to speak. At last he said:

"And now, Dora, tell me about yourself."

"In one moment. What a glorious view it is! Look how the sun gilds those dissolving clouds. Now that cloud landscape disappears as rapidly as it formed. Cape, hill, headland, mountain of that golden panorama melt away before the destroyer. So, Mr. Ogilvie, do the illusions of love and youth before the sun of this every-day life."

"Why do you speak thus, Dora?"

"Why do I speak thus?" replied the girl, bitterly. "Do you think the rosy tints have not been washed out of my young life already? Do you know or care what came of my listening to your idle nonsense when we last met? You know I was sent home in disgrace because I listened to you—that I changed the idle luxury of my aunt's house for the sordid pinching of my own home—and all because I was weak enough to listen to one who never thought it worth his while to inquire what became of me. Yes—you men, you teach us our lessons hardly; you bring the tears to our eyes, and a cracking to our heart-strings; but

they're lessons we don't forget. No—you do your engraving deeply."

Considering their previous flirtation had been quite as much Miss Paine's doing as the hapless Jim's, this was not at all bad in "the injured innocence" style. Poor Jim felt as crest-fallen as if he had been engaged, and deserted her at the altar, instead of having, by a sudden departure, abruptly broken off a flirtation.

"Dora," mumbled Jim, "will you forgive the past so far as to believe me when I say, that if I had stayed longer in England a debtor's prison would have been my fate?"

"And that prevented you from writing a line to one you professed, if my senses did not deceive me, to love!"

"Confound it," thought Jim, "and I once thought this girl was shy. Wonder what I'd better say next!"

He was saved further cogitation on this point. Suddenly a pair of lustrous grey eyes flashed up into his face. The girl laid her hand on his arm, and said:

"Jim, dear, you're puzzled. You foolish fellow, can't you see you've piqued me by the little pains you took to inquire after me?—can't you see the girl you deemed so shy can be bold enough when she loves and meets"—here Dora's voice faltered, and she blushed beautifully—"the man she feared she'd lost?"

In a second Jim's arm was round her waist, and his lips met hers. "My darling!" he whispered.

"There! that will do, I'm sure," said Dora, laughing, and extricating herself from his embrace. "Somebody must be looking our way, and I don't want to make gossip for the *table d'hôte*. I must run back now. See me to the gate, won't you, Jim?"

"Of course I will."

"Recollect I am 'the governess,' though I can do pretty well what I like with the old people, and get on fairly with the girls. If you want to see much of me, you must be intimate with them, mind. Good-bye!" and with a smile and a nod, Dora left the garden.

As for Jim, he felt that it was all over with

him, and that the forebodings over last night's pipe had been only too truly realised.

"Yes!" laughed Dora to herself, as she wended her way up the street; "it's true I've recaptured my truant lover, but then I don't quite know what to do with him now I've got him. I'm afraid poor Jim has got no money. Well, we shall see. In the mean time, being in love with me is good for him." She was a wise little woman in her generation, was Dora Paine.

The *table d'hôte* at the Londres that day was startled by the advent of a new-comer, whose irrepressible geniality speedily made him acquainted with every one there. He was attired in a light tourist's suit, and wore a white neck-cloth. He looked liked a parson out on a summer's tour. But mystery about him there was none. Time even for conjecture was wanting. Before dinner was over, he had, in the most genial, egotistical, off-hand way made every one in his vicinity quite aware that he was the Rector of Edendale, one of the prettiest parsonages in Hertfordshire—that he came

abroad every year for a summer's run, to see fresh scenery and faces, to collect new ideas, and prevent his mind generally from rusting. He wanted to see everything—he wanted everybody to join with him in seeing it. He fraternised with the Chalmers party, drank wine with Jim, complimented Miss Paine, and laughed with the Leslies—told them his troubles about his cows, and how badly some land he farmed promised this year—laughed gaily over his bachelor life, and the discomforts of an unmarried parson. Finally favouring the company with some of his parochial difficulties, and how he believed it was all from want of a lady at the Rectory.

"See Mont St. Michel of course he must. Hadn't they or the Chalmers' seen it? Delightful! Why not make up a party for to-morrow or the next day? Mr. —— I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Ogilvie," supplemented Jim.

"Delighted to make your acquaintance. Would join also? Capital! Of course nothing could be jollier."

There was no holding the irrepressible rector on his travels, so the Mont St. Michel party was made up.

As Jim said "good night" that evening, he whispered to Miss Paine, "Come and have another look at the view to-morrow morning."

An arch glance and a little nod was Dora's response. But that walk the next morning was a very different affair from that of the previous day. It was true Dora was punctual to her tryst; but then she was accompanied by Miss Chalmers; and "that confounded parson," as Jim mentally called him, had also attached himself to them to see the stones of which he had heard from Miss Paine at dinner on the preceding night.

"So unlucky her taking early rising into her head," murmured Dora *sotto voce* as she bade Jim good morning.

Jim sulked a little at starting; a mistake on his part, for the irrepressible rector (he announced his name as Phipps, by the way), in the ardour of his antiquarian researches, was compelled to apply to Miss Paine for informa-

tion. Consequently Jim found himself paired off, he hardly knew how, with Miss Selina Chalmers. However, he soon recovered his spirits, and as there was nothing for it but to accept the situation, he rattled away to that young lady, who seemed not a little pleased with her cavalier.

She was a fresh, good-looking girl, and, though perhaps a nice observer might detect she was not quite a lady, she was anything but the missy vulgar girl Jim had stigmatised her as, on her first appearance at the Londres. Then her unmistakable admiration of himself tickled his vanity and stimulated him to make himself decidedly agreeable.

"Oh, Dora, how handsome and agreeable Mr. Ogilvie is!" said Selina Chalmers as they ascended the stairs of the hotel together.

"You think so?" said Miss Paine drily; "perhaps he is. Jim, Jim," she murmured to herself when she got into her own room, "I can't quite make up my mind what to do about you."

The Mont St. Michel party came off in a

day or two. A longish drive through a rather pretty country brought them to the edge of the famous sands over which the tide ran high daily, quite isolating the weird old rock from the mainland. Fearful were the stories of people overtaken by the rushing waters in traversing that mile of silting sand, for the tide comes in like a mill race in that Normandy bay. Dread the legends of strong men and bonnie peasant lasses who had been too venturesome, and had been sucked in by the rapacious quicksands that abound there. Stupendous were the lies told by the powerful, wiry, barefooted Norman guide of the rescues he had made over those treacherous sands; of the grim corpses he had seen in his fishing or fowling adventures there in the winter; of the wretched fate of men who had tried to escape from the *cachettes* of the drear old prison, as it was in the days of the Great Revolution.

Our party have arrived at the strip of shingly beach that surrounds the rock. They pass through the massive gateway, and ascend

the steep ill-paved road into the little town, or rather hamlet, that nestles at its feet. Jim Ogilvie is a little discontented. Somehow Selina Chalmers seems fated to be his companion, while that "confounded parson," as Jim once more terms him, seems to have appropriated Dora Paine. They climb, you are always climbing to begin with at Mont St. Michel, those dreadfully steep stairs. The church, the cloisters, the *salle*, are all shown to them in their turn. They come at last to the *cachettes*, those fearful little dungeons under the roof; they peep in, but to their eyes, used to daylight, all seems utter darkness. Their guide in solemn tones narrates of political prisoners who entered those little cells as young men, only to leave them after many years; sewn up in a blanket, with a shot attached to their lifeless feet, for a sullen plunge over the parapet when the tide ran high.

The *oubliettes* of the Bastile recur to the memory. One thinks of those gay republicans of the tricolor, who danced the *carmagnole*

and demolished the Bastile in Paris to establish it again at grim St. Michel. The world goes round, but men remain the same, and, like the beasts, ever worry their stricken brethren.

The irrepressible Phipps and Jim must of course try temporary incarceration in a *cachette* each to see what it was like. Armed with a cigar fusee each prepared for his enterprise. Stop! would no lady share the adventure? Of course. When was woman's courage known to fail on such occasions? Miss Paine and Miss Chalmers came nobly to the front.

"Now, Miss Paine," said Jim.

"In one moment," replied Dora.

Jim had been chafing we know for some time at the way in which Phipps had somehow monopolised Dora. Now was his time for an explanation.

"Give me your hand," he said, advancing cautiously into the darkness, and stretching his hand out behind him.

A little hand was put into his. He drew

the owner gently forward, not forgetting to press the hand tenderly as he did so.

The lady gave a slight scream as the door closed behind them.

"Don't be frightened, darling," murmured Jim, as he stole his arm round his companion's waist. "I'll take every care of you."

"Oh, oh, it's so dark! Don't, please."

"My pet, I loved you from the first, you know—from the first time I ever saw you;" and Jim, taking rather a mean advantage of the situation, snatched half a dozen kisses from lips that were certainly yielded with very little denying. "Never mind your friends or mine," continued Jim. "Only say you'll be mine. I never loved woman as I love you. Kiss me, dearest, and say Yes."

A pair of arms stole round his neck, and a modest little kiss was given for answer.

"I say," called out old Chalmers, "haven't you people had enough of 'cachetting' by this time? I'm all for getting back to the lunch."

"All right," replied Jim, "let us out. I don't think it half so bad as it looks."

The door was opened, and Jim led out his fellow-prisoner—*Miss Selina Chalmers.*

Jim stared like a man in a maze; he was too dumbfoundered to speak. Miss Chalmers, whose cheeks wore the most roseate hue, seemed also quite afraid to encounter any one's glances.

"Now let out the other delinquents," chuckled Chalmers, and out of the next *cachette* stepped forth Miss Paine and the parson. Phipps looked a little serious; but Dora was as quiet and self-possessed as usual, taking Mr. Phipps' arm for the descent with the most perfect *sang froid*—Miss Chalmers, of course, falling once more to Jim's care. What to do he didn't quite know; but Jim's knowledge of the world told him this much—however he might get out of it afterwards, he could do nothing now. After kissing a girl for five minutes in the dark, telling her he loved her, and asking her to marry him (it's true by mistake), he couldn't quite throw her over the same afternoon. She was, as I've already said, not a bad-looking girl, and

just "sweet seventeen" to boot; so Jim in a more modified form continued to make himself as agreeable as his utterly upset equilibrium allowed.

As for Selina Chalmers, she was too bewildered by a first and unexpected declaration of love to be more than rather frightened at Jim's *petits soins*, though she rather liked his calling her Lina.

The drive homeward was quiet. Jim was dying to have a few words with Dora; but that astute young lady never gave him a chance. He found himself always beside his *fiancée*. Jim, in his most ferocious moods, was lamb-like to women, and Miss Selina's barely-concealed blushes and general confusion ensured her kind treatment.

On their return to the hotel, Jim made his adieux. The shy glance of Selina's dark eyes seemed to him his "kismet," and he could not refrain from returning it with a warm pressure of the timid little hand that was put forth to his at parting.

"One moment, Mr. Ogilvie," said Miss Paine,

following him to the door. "Don't forget that book you promised me. I should like to see if I am right about that particular passage."

This was all Greek to Jim; but he was beginning to be aware that Dora's manœuvres were a little beyond him.

"Grand Place at seven to-morrow," she whispered, "and I'll explain all. Good night."

Miss Paine had been but a few minutes in her room that evening before there came a knock at the door, and Miss Chalmers entered. She had had before this more than one little skirmish with Dora, in which she had been notably worsted, and it was an unusual thing on her part to make a confidante of Miss Paine. But then, you see, she was in all the flush of a first love. She had admired Jim Ogilvie very much from the beginning. Schoolgirl as she was, no one had ever made love to her before, and she took it very much in earnest now, as young girls generally do. Her sex's wit told her already that Dora, she knew not how,

could influence Jim for good or evil as far as she was concerned. So she came to tell her story, and entreat Miss Paine to throw no blight on her young dream.

"You're quite right, my dear," said Dora, after hearing the somewhat faltering confession. "He has position, and is a gentleman. I knew something of him in England. Your papa has money; and if he only does what he should, you'll make a very happy couple. Poor Jim, you see, has nothing."

Selina started a little at "poor Jim," but she felt as if she were in Dora's hands, and then—well, she didn't want to lose her lover. "Shall you go out before breakfast to-morrow?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Mayn't I come with you?" It had been Dora's suggestion, her coming the morning before.

"No. Don't be jealous, you little stupid, or I won't do anything for you. You may trust me, Selina."

"Good night, Dora, and thank you so much.

I know I have behaved badly to you often. But you'll forgive all now, won't you?" And Selina shyly offered her cheek.

Dora just brushed it with her lips. "It will be your father's fault," she said, "if you don't marry Jim Ogilvie. Now, good night. Go to bed, and dream of your marriage bells ringing."

"Yes, Jim," she murmured, as Selina left the room; "I don't think you can have me; so I'll be magnanimous, and do the best I can for you, though you hardly deserve it. Well for you, sir, you returned to your allegiance, to begin with, or I can't say what I might have been tempted to do."

And what were Jim's reflections that evening over his solitary pipe? That hardened ex-hussar was completely beaten.

"Don't know how the deuce it's to come off," he muttered. "Not 'in the know' one bit this time. Wonder whether she did it on purpose? What does she mean? Don't think she means *me*, anyway. Rather a sell, because I *was* in earnest. What the devil am I to do

about Selina? Evening train for Paris to-morrow I should think's about 'my form.' Wonder what she's got to say to-morrow?"

On arriving at the Place the next morning, Jim found Dora there awaiting him. "How well she looked," he thought, "in her half-mourning," as she came forward to meet him, the grey eyes dancing with fun.

"Oh, Jim, Jim!" she said, as she extended her hand, "is this your love for me? The first picnic we go to you leave me, and propose to somebody else. Wouldn't come near me all day even."

"You didn't give me much chance," said Jim, bitterly. "Besides, you know, Dora, I thought——"

"I know nothing," she interrupted, laughing, "except that Mr. Phipps had to take care of me all day, and Selina has told me what took place between you and her in the *cachette*."

"Dora, my darling, for Heaven's sake——"

"Come into the garden, Jim, and do be quiet. You can't have so many darlings; at

bast, not all at once, you know," said Miss Paine, roguishly.

"Dora, you know——"

"Do hold your tongue. Come and sit down on this bench, and listen to me."

"But you know I don't mean to marry Selina; that it was a mistake. I love you, and mean to marry you."

"Can't be done, Jim, dear;" and Miss Paine shook her head solemnly, though, from a slight twitching about the corners of her mouth, it might be doubted if a strong inclination to laugh was not at that moment her ruling impulse.

"I don't quite know now how it all happened, Dora; but I believe you were the cause of it," said Jim, sulkily. "I half think you mean taking up with that confounded parson. I'd break his neck if I was quite clear about it."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," replied Dora, sharply. "I'll not have my intended husband immolated. Don't look savage, sir. Listen to me."

"I didn't come here to be made a fool of," said Jim, fiercely, as he rose. "Marry the parson, then. I shall start for Paris by the afternoon train."

"No, you won't. Jim, don't be foolish. Sit down, and listen patiently till I have done. When I first met you I liked you more than any one I had ever seen. Don't mistake me; I have never loved any one, not even you. I doubt whether it is really in me to do so. I was poor, and very tired of that poverty. I thought you rich, and wanted to marry you. If you had been, I should have made you a very good wife. I could have liked you as well as it is in me to like any one; perhaps better. If I have not much heart, I have a pretty good head. That little fiasco occurred, or I might have married you. Dreadful thing for both of us, Jim, eh? What could we have lived on? Neither you nor I are good at economy."

"Good-bye," he said savagely between his set teeth. "You make me think worse of women than I ever did yet."

She laid her hand on his arm, and the mocking tones in which she had as yet spoken softened marvellously. Heartless as she was, still what of heart she had Jim had touched. At this minute, when she was about to bid him leave her, she could not but feel a slight pang that it must be so. She wavered for a second in her purpose, and then the worldly, scheming little head recovered itself.

"Don't go yet, please," she said. "Jim, we can't have all we would like in this world. If I was rich, I would marry you. If I tell you it was my plan that Selina entered the *cachette* with you, forgive me. It was as much for you as myself. You've asked her to marry you, and she has consented. Do it. Her father is rich. You were prepared once before to marry for money. Do it now. She's a nice girl—young. You can make of her what you will; and one thing more: she believes what women don't altogether in these days——" She paused.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"Thoroughly in her lover," and Dora's eyes dropped.

There was a silence of some moments between them.

"And you," inquired Jim, roughly, at last, "who never cared for me—who led me to think you did——"

"Jim, don't throw stones. If I have had the best of it a little, I'm sure I deserved it. I risked most. Let the past be buried between us."

"But you—what do you mean to do?"

"Do?" she replied, with a light laugh—"why, marry the parson, of course, you goose. He *can* keep me, which you can't. He's not quite asked me yet, but he will before two days are over. Now, don't be sulky any more, Jim. Do as I tell you, and leave me to myself. It's best for both of us. Good-bye. Shake hands, and let's part friends. Yes; you may kiss me just for the last time."

"By Jove, Dora, you're a clever woman!"

"Thanks, monsieur." And making him a low curtsey, Miss Dora took her way back to the hotel.

A few days elapsed, harassing in the extreme

to poor Selina, who was dreadfully jealous of the attentions that her affianced occasionally showed Miss Paine. In vain Jim told her that "was but to take off suspicion." In vain Dora laughed at her. The girl was jealous, and had some cause for it. Those two worldly Philistines could hardly confide to her that the Rev. Phipps had to be slightly stimulated; but so it was. Four days saw her troubles over. At the end of that time Miss Paine, in a charming suffusion of blushes, announced her engagement. Jim followed suit. Mr. Chalmers was at first a little indignant at the latter; but in twenty-four hours, during which Dora had placed it to him in the most favourable light, immensely proud of his daughter's conquest, and the two engagements were shortly solemnised on this side.

Jim and his wife get on very comfortably—a slight storm at Christmas, on the way they habitually exceed the very liberal allowance old Chalmers gives them, being all that ruffles their tranquil waters. Selina is submissive on every point but one, and that is any

intimacy with the Phippses. As for the Rev. Phipps, he believes implicitly in his wife; and if she is occasionally a little "coquette," she is far too clever to go the length of ever letting scandal be busy with her name.

JACK THISTLETON'S LUCK.

A Story in Three Chapters.

CHAPTER I.

The Row.

What speculations and superstitions there have been from time immemorial about luck! You hear of men born lucky or *vice versâ*. Philosophers have theorised about it, and argued that those who complain of their ill-luck are simply those who neglect their opportunities; that a certain amount of good and evil fortune is dealt out to all of us in this world, but we are wont to neglect the good and perversely cultivate the evil—playing our cards, in short, like an injudicious gambler, who displays extreme caution when Fortune favours him, but invariably backs his bad

luck heavily. I don't know how that might have been in the days of the patriarchs. When a man gets an innings as long as Methuselah's, there is time for a good deal of fluctuation in the chances of his life; but in the much more moderate span allotted to us in these days, it is quite possible to have a run against one, and be laid quietly in the grave before one's luck changes.

Jack Thistleton was born to good luck. From the time he played in Eton *versus* Harrow, and was missed at point off his fourth ball—he scored fifty-four runs afterwards—up to this present, when he is a captain of Hussars, there never was such a lucky dog as Jack Thistleton. The old saying, that 'one man may steal a horse, while another may not look over the hedge,' was never more fully exemplified than in his case. He tumbled into scrapes as if only to show how dexterously he could get out of them. When Jack got hit so heavily at what is termed 'a little unlimited' down at Aldershot just before the Derby, did he not immediately afterwards win the club

sweep on that event, and was so spared all the inconveniences usually attendant upon such disasters? To whom but Jack could it have occurred, after that terrible Ascot for backers, when the plunging to recoup was so heavy on the last day, to come across a tout who persuaded him to back an outsider for the Wokingham's instead of the favourite, upon which all his friends were laying odds so wildly? The favourite, as favourites sometimes will be, was nowhere in the race, but the outsider won cleverly. Again, when he played that celebrated billiard-match with Major Screwanside, his luck was very singular: the balls invariably broke for him, and as persistently declined to do so for the Major; Jack finally winning by a fluke of six, as if to convince his opponent that science was no match for fortune. Finally, was he not prevented by duty from going to the Caledonian ball just as he had made up his mind to propose to pretty Miss Singleton, who accepted Sir Alfred Lackerdale a few days afterwards? Over Lady Lackerdale *née* Singleton society

had long shook its head, even before she contributed a chapter to the proceedings of the Divorce Court. By no means the least piece of Jack's good luck that escape of four years ago.

To judge by his moody countenance as he lounges against the rails in Rotten-row, you would hardly put Jack Thistleton down as one of Fortune's favourites. He is certainly looking far more serious than is usual with him. Popular in society, and impressed with as firm faith in his star as the great Napoleon, light-hearted Jack Thistleton glided down life's river with a laugh on his lips. It took a great deal to make that gallant Hussar look solemn over anything, and yet at the present moment he is meditating very gravely as to what can have put him into the bad books of old Ralph Dyson.

"There's no doubt about it," mutters Jack to himself, "old Dyson don't cotton to me a bit—t'other way on, I'm afraid. If he'd a decent pretext I'll be hung if I don't think he'd cut me to-morrow. It's deuced unlucky. I can

get along with most people, and I thought old Dyson rather liked me at one time. I'm sure I've always been uncommon civil to him—lobster-salad and champagned him at Epsom Spring Meeting. It can't be because I do a little racing—the old gentleman's fonder of that than I am. I suppose he sees I'm spooney on Annie, and don't care about me as a son-in-law. I wonder what she'd say, by the way, if I asked her. Deuced odd, I shouldn't be afraid to ask any other girl in London to be my wife, but I can't help feeling a little nervous when it comes to Annie Dyson. I have been clean out of luck, too, lately—that is, for me."

Hardly necessary to say that on a fine June morning the Park was thronged. The usual disjointed scraps of conversation fell on the ear—that fashionable jargon which, varying a little with the season, always seems to float about the Row like motes in a sunbeam. The merits of *Lohengrin* and Galopin were canvassed with equal enthusiasm; much reference to Prince's, to polo, to fabulous winners at Ascot,

to the forthcoming University cricket-match, to dances, to garden-parties, to the coaching club, to Salvini, to Irving, to the Member for Stoke, and Mr. Seymour Haden's wicker-work coffins; while ever and anon came the refrain of "Have you seen the pictures?"—that unfailing source of inspiration to those whose conversational powers are limited. Busy as Jack Thistleton may be in cogitating upon Mr. Dyson's unaccountable dislike to him—a dislike the more provoking in consequence of his previous friendliness—he keeps a keen eye upon the passers-by. It is not long before his vigilance is rewarded by the appearance of Mrs. Dyson and her daughter. He is just about to make his way towards them when he is suddenly seized upon by one of those social inflictions, the head of whose family is popularly supposed to reside at Mont Cenis—a very numerous family, old as the days of Horace at all events, and in no very visible danger of becoming extinct.

"Morning, Thistleton," observed Mr. Rutterton, the particular specimen in question.

How is it you're not riding? I thought you Cavalry fellows never came here on foot."

Jack muttered something to the effect of getting enough riding professionally, and was about to pass on. He had most excellent reasons for being afoot, though he did not think fit to disclose them. But you don't escape the clutch of society's octopus quite so easily, and Rutterton still clung to his victim. "Don't be in a hurry!" he exclaimed. "I've got such a good story to tell you."

"Better keep it till you meet a fellow who'll really appreciate it," retorted Jack. "I'm no judge of humour."

"Pooh! You know Grueby—man they call Butcher Grueby," commenced Rutterton. This was Rutterton's common style of narration. Having once heard Defoe glorified for the wonderful circumstantial manner in which his stories are told, Rutterton thought he could not do better than adopt that style. Previous to the joke, he usually indulged you with the biography of the hero of it. This perhaps gives realism to the incident, but

is apt to make the telling of it a little wearisome.

"O, yes," said Jack, exasperated past endurance, "I know all about him—everything he ever said, everything he's ever going to say, everything he ever did, and everything he's ever going to do. Good-bye. It's a first-rate story though." And in another moment, leaving Rutterton all agape, Jack was making his obeisance to Mrs. Dyson.

If Rutterton and his kind had commented on Thistleton's having given up riding in the morning, her compeers had not failed to note that Miss Dyson had also abandoned that exercise. She who so revelled in a canter, who had been so constant a companion of her father in the early part of the season, had now taken to walking quietly with her mother. Rutterton & Co. might wonder about such things, but the feminine observers speedily solved the enigma. They had for some time made up their minds that Captain Thistleton and Miss Dyson would be one of the matches of the year; latterly it had been rumoured

that the old gentleman was much opposed to the engagement. There were not wanting elderly ladies who could vouch for all the particulars of Jack Thistleton's interview with Mr. Dyson. How high words had passed between them, how Jack had been forbidden the house, and how Annie had passed the day in tears and hysterics. People always are so well-informed about their neighbours in London society, while the Ruttertons of this world, sooner than confess to ignorance of the gossip of the day, always give rein to their imagination. That there was some slight foundation for all these reports, we know; but it was the old story—gross exaggeration of the actual facts.

"Do find us chairs, Captain Thistleton," exclaimed Annie Dyson, their greetings over. "It is far too hot to walk about. You know, mamma dear, you hate what you call trailing up and down."

Mrs. Dyson laughed. The good lady was not in the least blind to her daughter's manœuvres; but then Jack was a favourite of hers; and what woman is loyal to her lord

and master when it comes to a difference of opinion about the eligibility of a suitor for her daughter's hand? She was quite aware that Annie had given up riding with her father because that warm-hearted but hot-tempered old gentleman would not behave with decent civility towards Jack when he joined them, as that imperturbable Hussar invariably did. Annie declared privately to her mother that Captain Thistleton bore her father's rudeness like an angel; the truth being he tolerated it with philosophical indifference, because he saw no help for it.

Jack very speedily provided his fair charges with chairs, and ensconced them therein after the approved diplomatic tactics in such cases; that is to say, he took care the young lady should be in the centre, so that a *tête-à-tête* was perfectly easy of attainment.

"Now, Captain Thistleton, what is your news this morning? You are going to the Skendlebys' on Friday, of course?" exclaimed Miss Dyson as she settled herself comfortably in her chair.

"Yes. You will keep a valse or two for me, won't you?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, and will promise not to be late. You know there are others who consider it a privilege to valse with me, and I shall probably be besieged."

"Do not fear. Am I ever late when there is a chance of meeting you?" retorted Jack warmly.

"No; you are very good," replied the young lady, colouring.

There was a pause. The situation was a little awkward. The girl felt every time they met that a declaration was imminent. It had trembled on Jack's lips half a score times in the last fortnight, but he felt nervous about putting his fate to the test. He was very much in earnest, and though the lady smiled kindly on him, the thought that Mr. Dyson viewed him askance made him hesitate. He drew off his glove and commenced tugging at his moustache—a common practice of his when in difficulties; Miss Dyson drew patterns on the ground with the point of her

parasol. The silence became embarrassing; it was the lady that broke it.

"What a quaint ring!" she exclaimed, glancing shyly at Jack's hand. "I don't think I ever saw it before."

"No! I don't always wear it. This is my amulet. It was given me years ago under somewhat peculiar circumstances, and I am superstitious enough to believe it brings me luck."

"Let me look at it," said Annie. "You astonish me, Captain Thistleton. I should not have thought you believed in charms."

Jack's glance, as he drew the ring from his finger and handed it to his fair companion, was such an affirmation of that belief as brought the blood once more to her temples; but he made no attempt to indulge in the obvious persiflage that her words gave opening for. Men, when they are in earnest, don't indulge in idle compliment; they feel instinctively that the passing of base coin is detrimental to their interests.

Again there was an awkward silence,

during which Miss Dyson examined the ring with affected interest. A plain gold snake, with a large sapphire set in the head. She turned it about for some few seconds, then slipped it on her finger, and remarked gaily:

"There, now; I'm in possession of your talisman. Will it bring me luck?"

"I hope so," replied Jack gravely; "it has hitherto brought it to me."

"Tell me how you got it."

"It is too long a story to tell now. Shall I tell you its supposed qualities?"

Miss Dyson nodded assent.

"It conveys not only fortune to the wearer, but gives promise that the hand round whose white finger the serpent may twine will one day be bestowed on the snake's owner," said Jack a little nervously.

"For a dance, I presume, you mean? I promised you one, you know," replied Miss Dyson quickly, albeit with a slight tremor in her voice, as she drew the ring from her finger. She was a little indignant he should speak to her in fable on this subject.

Now that he had taken the plunge, the Hussar's natural audacity speedily reasserted itself. It was in steady tones he replied:

"No, you don't think so. You know, Annie, very well what it is I would ask of you. Look inside the ring."

The girl did so quickly; her curiosity was aroused. There were two—no, three words engraved on the inner surface, she saw clearly, but so small it took her a second or two to decipher them. Then she read "Pour la vie."

"Will you give it me?" said Jack, in a low passionate whisper. "You know I love you very dearly. Will you give me yourself, Annie?"

Miss Dyson's face flushed. She had been expecting him to ask her this question for some little time, yet now it had come, she hesitated. An inclination to say "no" when they mean "yes" is no uncommon phase of the feminine mind. She half extended the ring towards him.

"No!" exclaimed Jack. "No; keep it,

please, as a pledge that I have a right to replace it some day with another."

"How do you do, Mrs. Dyson?" said a sonorous voice. "Lovely morning, isn't it? How do do, Miss Dyson? Really the fatigues of the season make no visible impression on you."

Confronting the two stood Rutterton. That he could ever be *de trop* never occurred to that social octopus, or else the faces of two of the assailed might certainly have conveyed that fact to his mind.

Their dialogue was over for the present; but her greeting with Mr. Rutterton done with, Annie quietly slipped the ring back upon her finger, bestowing on her lover as she did so a smile that was ample answer to his request.

Meanwhile Rutterton commenced to prose placidly on after the manner of his kind, introducing his gruesome and circumstantial stories till he became past bearing. Even good-natured Mrs. Dyson felt that she was being hardly dealt with, and, looking towards

her daughter, murmured she thought it was getting time to see about lunch. Annie responded heartily to the maternal signal: "Quite so, mamma," she replied, rising; "we had best stroll homewards."

"Who shall deny my ring carries luck with it?" whispered Jack in jubilant tones, as he and Miss Dyson followed Rutterton and the elder lady towards Grosvenor Gate.

"You have put it to a most unfair use this morning, sir," retorted the young lady. "Remember, henceforth it is my property."

"And my luck identified with yours?" replied Jack passionately.

"Yes; pour la vie," returned the girl softly.

CHAPTER II.

THE RING.

JACK THISTLETON walked back to his club with elastic step after saying good-bye to Annie and her mother at Grosvenor Gate. In the first flush of his success he was scarce

likely to think seriously that there were difficulties to be got over in regard to Mr. Dyson. When the lady of our love has said us ay, we are wont to look upon our love-suit as brought happily to a conclusion; and yet the authorities sometimes lead us a hard time of it before they are finally propitiated. Not indeed to be propitiated at all on occasion, but obstinate, implacable, nor to be persuaded that there is good of any kind to be found in us.

Possessed of a comfortable little property worth some three thousand a year, it had been a sore disappointment, both to Mr. Dyson and his wife, that no son had been born to them; but as years rolled on, and it became evident that this was not to be, the old gentleman resigned himself to circumstances. He resolved that his daughter should marry whom she pleased, providing only that he was a straightforward honourable man; and he determined finally that, Annie's husband, when the time came, and he himself should be gathered to his fathers, was to take his

name and reign at Lursby in his stead. Why, then, should he object to Thistleton? for the Hussar made no mistake when he supposed that the change in Mr. Dyson's manner was consequent upon an indisposition to accept him as a son-in-law.

With these liberal views as to his daughter's choice, one would have said Jack Thistleton had but to win the girl and Mr. Dyson's consent was assured. A good-looking fellow, of very fair family, with something of his own, and whose escapades had been of that venial description that count for nothing in a man's career; a good sportsman too—a matter of no slight merit in the old gentleman's eyes, who loved to see a man pull a quick and deadly trigger as well as go straight when hounds were running—Jack was both these, and could handle a bat very tidily to boot. Why, then, should Mr. Dyson have suddenly changed his platform, as our cousins say, and, pooh-poohing what he had so often said to the wife of his bosom, regard Thistleton askance?

Simply this: he had taken a great fancy to

Jack, and had he asked him for his daughter last year he would have welcomed him heartily as a son-in-law. But a few weeks before he arrived in town this season he had dined *en garçon* with an old friend and neighbour, who was just launching his eldest son upon the world as a subaltern in the Guards; and it had occurred to these two over a magnum of '48 that, as their estates joined, it would be a good and wise thing that their offspring should join hands too, and concentrate the properties. 'Most suitable,' they argued, as the bottle waxed low; 'both about the same age,'—forgetting that a girl of nineteen is years older than a boy of twenty. The idea so tickled the two *bon vivants* that they had just one more bottle to drink the healths of the young people, and then Mr. Dyson drove home, voluble and genial, to confide this happy inspiration to his wife. That lady was by no means enamoured of his scheme. She pointed out that the selected bridegroom was far too young for Annie, and hinted, moreover, that the young lady had some strength of character, and

would probably insist on having a voice in her own disposal. There, like a wise woman, she stopped, or else she might have added that she thought Annie and Captain Thistleton had conceived a fancy for each other which bid fair to ripen into something warmer. Like a true woman, she was more anxious about her daughter's happiness than that her marriage should make her the eventual mistress of acres.

Mr. Dyson, it was true, did not espouse the cause of his neighbour's son openly; but he was no great tactician, and it was not long before his daughter had arrived at the comprehension of his scheme. Her mother had said never a word, but a girl is not long in understanding why the man she rather favours is looked on coldly by the authorities, and another young gentleman persistently thrown in her way. The result of Mr. Dyson's clumsy strategy was inevitable. Annie, of course, was kinder than common to Thistleton, to make up for what she considered his ill-treatment; whilst she snubbed the elected of her father

with unswerving consistency. Mr. Dyson was fain to confess things were not working as he would have them, although as yet unaware how very traverse they were running to his wishes. When we sacrifice the dictates of common sense to the inspirations of '48 claret, little good comes to most of us.

But the floorcloth is out and the awning is pitched; there is a blaze of light at No. — Grosvenor-square, where Sir Edward and Lady Skendleby are receiving their friends to dance, to flirt, or talk scandal, as may seem best to them. A baronet of many generations is Sir Edward, and an aristocrat to the very tips of his shrivelled fingers. Lady Skendleby, who brought him a hundred thousand pounds, which her respected but somewhat obscure progenitors had made in hides and tallow, it is needless to observe, outdid her lord in that respect. Jack Thistleton was a very early arrival, and fidgeted about the landing in a fashion most unwonted with that usually imperturbable Hussar. He had to parry more than one insidious attack from chaperons

embued with a stern determination to do their duty by their fair charges and provide them with partners if woman might. At last he sees Miss Dyson ascending the staircase, and hastens forward to greet Annie and her mother. He can see in the warm shake of the hand with which the elder lady meets him that she is in full possession of how he and Annie stand to one another. This is somewhat reassuring, for during that half-hour on the landing Jack has been thinking rather nervously over how Mr. and Mrs. Dyson will receive his proposal for their daughter's hand. Now, at all events, he feels confident that Mrs. Dyson is on his side.

Having seen that lady comfortably installed amongst her fellow-martyrs, Jack carries off his betrothed for a valse.

"I see you have told your mother what has passed between us."

"Yes," replied Miss Dyson; "I have no secrets from her, although she has been trying to keep one from me of late. Poor mother, she is not good at conspiring."

"What does she say?" inquired Jack a little anxiously. "Will she give her consent?"

"Yes," returned the girl gaily; "I don't think she will object to you as a son-in-law, if you can only persuade papa to think of you in that light."

"I don't know how it is," said Jack meditatively, "but he has taken a dislike to me lately. I got on well enough with him till I fell in love with you, Annie; but since then, or rather since he discovered it, he has shown great distaste to my society. I daresay he thinks I'm not good enough for you. I suppose I'm not."

"No, I don't suppose you are. You none of you are good enough for us, you know," replied the young lady roguishly. "Still, you see, I have thought otherwise. Hush! take me for a turn now. Old Mrs. Torkington is trying *so* hard to hear what we are saying; I can see her ears quivering."

A few turns of the room, and then Jack led his partner into a quiet corner near the conservatory.

"Well, Annie," Jack observed, "since you have said me yes, I'll not believe I sha'n't succeed with your father. I'll go and have it out with him to-morrow."

"No, indeed you must not," interrupted Miss Dyson; "you must wait—indeed you must. I know, Jack, that what you propose is the proper thing to do; but papa has got a maggot in his head, and except a most favourable opportunity should occur, you must not speak to him as yet. Give me a little time, and I shall demolish that pet scheme of his."

"Why, what scheme has he? Of course—I see—he wants you to marry somebody else: who is it?"

"Have you got any pistols, Jack?" said the girl with mock gravity.

"Yes," returned Thistleton, laughing, "but I've never practised with them."

"Ah, then, you wouldn't hit any one. Yes, you've a rival."

"I think," replied Jack with a passionate glance, "I can afford to be magnanimous and pity him."

"Such confidence is really most unbecoming; you ought to be all anxiety, you know," retorted Annie, laughing. "One would think that you were still the owner of that magic ring. Like Aladdin, sir, you've lost it."

"But the Princess Balroubadour has found it, so that I have no cause to feel anxious. Who is my rival?"

"O, never mind; he is not so in reality, only in papa's imagination. Poor boy! I don't suppose such an idea ever entered his head; and I've no doubt he considers me pretty well the most disagreeable young woman in all London."

"Why so?" inquired Jack curiously.

"I thought it just as well that idea should enter his head," replied Annie demurely, "and took measures accordingly; otherwise I'm not unpopular as a rule."

"You!" replied Jack with a look that was much more effective than any words. "But, though I suppose I must not call often, still I shall see you?"

"O, yes; I don't intend you to be left in ignorance of my movements. We are going to stay with some friends for Stockbridge races next week. Can't you come?"

"Of course I can, and will. Such a pretty meeting! No crowd: one can see everything, and move about in comfort."

"So I hear. O, do come, Jack, and we'll back horses, and see what the ring will do for us."

"Ah, it's done for a good many of us!" replied Jack, laughing. "I mean the other one—the betting ring."

"Did it ever hurt you?" inquired the girl gravely.

"No; I've lost and won, won and lost. I never came to much harm over it."

"Well, I shall expect you to give such practices up when we marry. In the mean time you must come to Stockbridge and win me bales of gloves. I must see the ring tried—or was it all nonsense you told me the other morning?"

"My dearest Annie, nonsense!" exclaimed Jack reproachfully.

"No, I don't mean that; you know I didn't, and only say so to tease me," returned Miss Dyson earnestly. "I am talking of the ring; that part about the person whose finger the snake encircled, for instance—"

"Proved true," replied Jack gaily; "although, I admit, I improvised that for the occasion. Shall I tell you how I got it?"

"O, yes, do!" cried Annie, her eyes sparkling in anticipation of the story.

"How well you look to-night!" exclaimed Jack admiringly; and the girl did look well. The maize and cerise-silk dress she wore suited her brunette beauty. The rich dark tresses, coiled closely round her head, contrasted well with the deep-red camellia that nestled in their folds, while the mobile animated features in their constant play were wondrous fair to gaze upon.

"No compliments, but the story," murmured Annie, with a slight blush at her lover's commendation.

"Well, some six or seven years ago I was at Homburg, and, as you know, those were

the days of the tables—when play ran high, when one heard of fabulous coups, and men were haunted with visions of breaking the bank. At the time of my arrival, there was a Frenchman whose extraordinary luck was the talk of the place. He had certainly not succeeded so far in breaking the bank, but he carried off large sums from the table night after night. Shortly after there appeared a pale fair young man, who also commenced playing with surprising fortune. He was a Russian, Count Woranzsko by name, and gambled with all the imperturbable phlegm of his nation. Up to this I had been a looker-on, but now I, too, got bitten with the disease of the place. At first I won and lost, not doing much either one way or the other; but at last, one night, when luck had been running steadily against me, I suddenly determined to follow my Russian friend's game. I did so, and was a considerable winner, though on a small scale compared to himself. Calm and unruffled as he appeared, staking his money with a wearied

air and half-closed eyes, I believe there was nothing that took place at the table escaped him. He quickly detected that I followed his game, and one night, on leaving the *salon*, laughingly complimented me on the steadfast manner in which I adhered to his standard. From that hour an acquaintance arose between us, and from closely watching his game I came to observe one curious circumstance. He wore this very ring on the little finger of his left hand, and every time before putting down his stake he touched it lightly with the fingers of the right. So quickly was it done, and so did he vary the gesture, that it was some time before I observed it, and even then I watched him for two nights more before I was quite sure about it. A gambler's superstition, you will say, and it doubtless was nothing more; but his complete belief in it the sequel will show.

"It so happened that, from the time the Russian began to win, luck set steadily against the Frenchman. Like many of his nation, he bore his reverses badly. He, who had been so

gay and good-humoured while winning, became morose, violent, and ill-tempered. In short, he didn't know how to lose; and men who have not learnt that should never play. My Russian friend would sometimes cast a most contemptuous glance at his French adversary; for it had come to this with them, that they seemed, while playing against the tables, to be really playing against each other. If one backed the rouge, the other backed noir. It was the talk of the place, and Homburg was almost divided into two parties — French and Russian. Luck now fluctuated, setting sometimes one way, sometimes the other, but finally adhered persistently to the Russian. The two men never spoke; but the Frenchman would scowl darkly at his adversary when the run went against him, and deride the folly of those who had followed the Count when he himself won.

"The crash came at last. A most disastrous night to the French party was the culmination of a succession of very bad evenings; and finally their chief, with a savage execration,

pronounced himself ruined, and rushed from the table. The Russian played on and successfully for some little time longer, then gathered up his winnings and lounged out of the *salon*. As we left to walk home to our hotel, the Frenchman pushed past us, jostling rudely against the Count. It was so palpably done on purpose that the Russian immediately exclaimed, 'It is monsieur's intention to insult me, I presume.' A derisive laugh was the only reply. 'Enough,' replied the Count· 'these affairs are best settled at once. My friend shall wait upon monsieur to-night, and then we can arrange our little business comfortably before breakfast to-morrow.'

"To cut a long story short, the Count requested me to be his friend. It was awkward, but I couldn't well refuse. All preliminaries were arranged, and the next morning they met. Nothing could be more easy than my Russian friend's manner on the ground. He smiled as he took his place, and drawing off his gloves, waited for me to hand him the pistol. Just then I noticed the fingers

of his right hand cross mechanically to his left—the accustomed gesture. Suddenly he started and looked down: the ring was not upon his finger. He turned the least thing pale, then recovering himself, took the pistol from my hand, saying, 'Adieu, my friend; my kismet is written, and my time has come!'

"Five minutes afterwards I bore him back to the hotel, shot through the lungs. He only lived a few hours, but long enough to tell me that he considered his fate bound up in that ring, which by some inexplicable mischance he had left that morning on his dressing-table."

"How very shocking!" cried Annie. "And he gave you that ring, Jack? I don't think I can ever wear it. I must give it you back."

But before Jack could reply, there burst upon their ears, in hideous monotone:

"I can tell you rather a good thing. Know Grueby—man they call Butcher Grueby—fellow who was in the Cambridge eleven in—Stop; let me see. I'll tell you the year directly."

"Old Rutterton, by all that's frightful!"

cried Jack. "Let's fly, Annie;" and the pair beat a precipitate retreat.

Standing in the conservatory, holding his victim by the lappel of his coat, Rutterton reminded one more forcibly than ever of the octopus in his tank. One might fancy Lady Skendleby had secured him specially for the occasion, and was casting to him such guests as displeased her, much as the Cæsars gave the early Christians to the lions.

CHAPTER III.

THE RACE.

ALL hail to thee, Stockbridge, prettiest and pleasantest of race-courses in all England, unless perhaps it may be Goodwood! Classic ground too art thou, and wondrous are the trials that thy fir-capped knoll has looked down upon. From the days when no weight could stop the Hero, in the times when Pitsford was thought to have the blue ribbon at his mercy, when Andover and Hermit were

found so good that all Danebury could have wept because there were not two Derbys that year,—down to the sadder times when Lady Elizabeth and the Earl strode along the gallop and somehow mired the track as they went, numberless have been the good horses trained over Stockbridge.

A little too far from any of the big towns to be swamped by the incursion of the rough element, with blasphemy on their lips and fierce lust for plunder in their hearts, to whom the whole alphabet of robbing, from garroting to welshing, is familiar, Stockbridge in some sort resembles a private meeting. You can lounge about its spacious lawn or climb to the top of its queer old-fashioned stand without being hustled or squeezed, stroll across to the paddock and lazily criticise the horses, drop into the ring to hear what may be doing, and so back to the lawn again, to lean over the rails or stand upon a bench and see the race in perfect comfort. Everybody moves about at Stockbridge: the ladies are not nailed to their boxes or seats, as they are more or less

at Epsom and Ascot, but can wander about with perfect freedom.

Desperate too have been the struggles seen over the Danebury Downs, and never perhaps was fought a fiercer battle than when the followers of the white and crimson hoops and those of the French gray and cerise backed their respective pets so madly, and the judge's fiat was that Athena and Léonie had run a dead-heat. Little blenching was there on either side, I ween, and the heaviness of the waging sufficiently attested that the partisans of either 'were of the same opinion still,' like unconvinceable woman. Ah's me! but the hoops went down before the cerise and gray in the deciding tussle, and caused a wail throughout all Danebury.

But a truce to these reminiscences. Never had the pretty little race-course looked to more advantage than it did this bright June morning. The clear summer sky was just flecked with some of those ominous-looking clouds that too often gather and descend, as if in rancorous envy of the ladies' toilettes at

this meeting, crowding them into the little stand, or driving them to seek refuge within the hospitable walls of the Bibury Club. Just enough of suspicion about the weather to give zest to every hour of sunshine—just that little uncertainty that admits of a bet of a new bonnet it rains. Wise in her generation was she who first thought of that most ingenious bit of hedging.

Miss Dyson is in great spirits this morning: there is the weather, the scene; and above all does she not know that she is to meet the man she loves, and pass some delicious hours dawdling about in his company? Dawdling do you think they would call it? Was there not a time when you would put another name to it, my cynical brother, before you got 'fat and scant of breath'? Dawdling days are over now for you and me; let us hope we made the most of them. But in vain does Annie glance anxiously about the lawn as she strolls up and down with her mother, there is still no sign of the laggard. Where can he be? When are they to try the power of this

mystic ring, which the girl wears, you may be sure, upon her finger? I don't mean to say Jack Thistleton had not implicit belief in that little golden serpent; but like the canny Scot who, with every confidence in his minister, thought it would not be amiss to stand well with the powers of darkness also, so did Jack Thistleton think it might be as well to see what was doing before he joined the lady of his love. One of the first men he met on entering the ring was an old ally of his—had been, indeed, a brother officer at one time, but was now a well-known turfite.

"How d'ye do, Balders?" he exclaimed. "No need to ask how you are: I never saw you look better. What about this Andover handicap? What is going to win?"

"Katarinka, old fellow, they'll tell you here. She's a strong favourite, but she won't quite stay, I fancy. Back mine for a little. I'm very sweet myself, and shan't be far off."

"What, the Phantom colt? It's a short price."

"You don't often see a good thing at a

long one in these days," replied Balders dryly "Four to one's good enough for me. Good-bye for the present."

Jack asked no more, but pushed his way into the centre of the crowd of bookmakers, and after some little difficulty succeeded in obtaining two hundred to fifty about the shadowy unnamed one. As he was leaving the ring he suddenly ran against Mr. Dyson. Although no betting-man, the old gentleman liked a little wager when he did go racing, and he had considerable belief, moreover, in Jack's knowledge of the turf. They of course stopped to shake hands, and their greeting done with, Mr. Dyson observed, "Katarinka, I suppose, will win this?"

"Not at all, Mr. Dyson," replied Jack, with that peculiarly oracular manner men invariably assume when speaking of racing matters. "I have just met Tom Balders. He's a right good judge, and tells me he's safe to win. I've backed it for fifty myself, and if you've a bet, you can't do better than follow his tip. Mrs. and Miss Dyson I presume are here?"

"Yes, you will find them on the lawn," replied the old gentleman dryly; and with a curt nod to Jack he also made his way into the ring.

"Captain Thistleton at last!" exclaimed Annie a little reproachfully as Jack joined them. "I began to think Stockbridge had not seemed sufficiently attractive to induce you to leave London."

"You didn't think anything of the kind," replied Jack in a low whisper. "You could not pay such a bad compliment to yourself if you tried."

"You've been a very long time finding us, you must admit," pouted the lady, with an affectation of being indignant.

"No; I found you immediately I looked for you, Annie. But I had something else to see about first."

"As if there could be anything to see about before me!" returned Miss Dyson, laughing in spite of herself.

"Oh, you have a good deal to say to it, and *both* rings have a great deal to say to it,

and your father will probably have something to say to it; and if 'the serpent' don't stand to us now, Annie, I don't know what will come of it."

"Good heavens, Jack! what can you mean?" cried Miss Dyson, utterly bewildered by Thistleton's volubility.

"Well, it is hard to explain, but I've played 'a bold stroke for a wife.' Did you ever hear of the piece, and can you name the lady?"

Annie smiled and murmured, "I think so."

"Further," continued Thistleton, "I've gone in for winning gloves enough to keep you *bien gantée* for the next two years."

"What do you mean?" cried the girl.

"I have invested all our hopes on Captain Balders' Phantom colt, and persuaded your father to do the same. Have you the ring about you?"

Miss Dyson passed her right hand across and lightly touched the gloved third finger of her left.

"Is that right?" she whispered, laughing.

"Yes, one of the Count's very gestures;

but I'm not sure, Annie, we ought not to have it out and perform fetish before it."

"But how is this to help us with papa?" inquired the young lady gravely.

"Well, you see, I have not patience to wait till you have convinced your father of his folly."

"O, it's not such a very foolish idea, you know, looking at it in a common-sense point of view," remarked Annie coquettishly.

"Don't jest, child, upon serious subjects," retorted Jack gravely; "I assure you this is no laughing matter. I look upon this Phantom colt's winning—it may be superstition, but I do look upon it—as connected with my obtaining your father's consent this afternoon."

"Nonsense, Jack; what can that have to do with it?"

"Because, my dear, I've noticed that a man who has just won his money by following your advice is always inclined to listen attentively and favourably to what next you may have to say to him."

"You atrocious conspirator!" cried the girl,

with a merry laugh; "and you think to wrest papa's assent to your carrying me off upon a mere chance like this!"

"Even so," replied Jack quietly; "at all events it may give me the chance to speak. But come, let me help you up on that bench to see it. If poor Woronsko's ring is ever to do us good service it's now. Come a little more this way, Mrs. Dyson, you will have a better view of the race from here. Let me help you up on to this bench."

The two ladies were speedily standing on one of the many seats that stud the Stockbridge lawn, and, handing his glasses to Annie, Jack said:

"Now keep your eye upon the sky-blue jacket and primrose cap; never mind anything else."

Suddenly came the clang of the bell, and the roar of the ring is hushed; the flag has fallen, and the competitors for the Andover Handicap are away. On they come in a clump for the first few hundred yards, the many-coloured silks glistening in the sun, and look-

ing in the distance like a flying tulip-bed; then a sky-blue jacket and *white* cap forges to the front, and leads the field some two or three lengths.

"Our horse in front, Jack!" cries Miss Dyson enthusiastically, looking through her glasses with that slight want of accurate observation rather notable amongst her sex on such occasions. Thistleton being without that assistance is unable as yet to read the colours. Round the bend they swing, and at the bush the veritable sky-blue and *primrose* cap rushes to the front and brings them along "a cracker." A shout of "The Phantom colt walks in!" breaks from the ring, and then they descend that slight dip just before reaching the stand known to turf-men as "the Stockbridge hole." Many a good horse has succumbed there, and as they rise it again and tear past the stand the sky-blue and primrose cap no longer leads; the horse is dying away, and, to use the phraseology of the race-course, is done with. A black jacket leads, and again comes a fierce shout of "The favourite wins!" followed by

a stentorian cry of "She don't for a hundred!" Even as the speaker uttered his challenge the sky-blue and white cap that had made the running at starting comes with a rush on the rails, and the pair run home a desperate finish. A pause, a hush, then up goes the mystic number, and "The Clown a neck, Katarinka second," is the judge's decision of the Andover Handicap. As for the Phantom colt, he is not even amongst the first four.

Jack drew a deep breath. He had been betting a good deal more than that fifty pounds, about which he concerned himself little.

"Done!" he exclaimed, after a few seconds. "I'm afraid, Annie, I've not mended matters with your father."

"But," said the young lady, who had been studying her card with much earnestness, "Captain Balders has won after all. Surely it's all right; I see the Clown belongs to him also."

"Yes," replied Jack grimly; "but we, like himself, unfortunately backed the other; and

worse again, I persuaded your father to follow suit. He didn't approve of me before; he'll not feel heavenly-minded towards me now."

"It is all my fault," cried Annie, now thoroughly comprehending the situation, and tearing off her glove recklessly. "I never should have taken the ring from you; take it back—take it back at once. I've ruined your luck, Jack. No," she continued softly, in answer to his sombre look, "I want you to take nothing else back, and you may replace it as soon as you please; but I have grown superstitious regarding it. It may bring luck on your finger, it does not on mine. Take it back, please," she continued imploringly; and silently the ring was transferred to her lover's hand.

Turning his head, Jack becomes suddenly aware that Mr. Dyson is coming their way.

"Here's your father, Annie!" he exclaimed. "Too late to make a bolt of it now, or else I assuredly don't wish to meet him just at present."

"Papa looks rather pleased," replied the girl.

"It isn't usual with people who have just lost their money," observed Jack dubiously.

"Bravo, Thistleton!" cried the old gentleman, slapping Jack on the shoulder in great glee. "Famous tip! famous race! d—mme, I had a regular gamble for me—took sixteen ponies about the winner. There's a new dress for you, Annie, and a couple of opera-boxes for next week; and I don't care what the cost may be."

"You backed the Clown!" exclaimed Jack, aghast.

"Yes; didn't you tell me to back Tom Balders' horse? Well, the first I came to on the card was Captain Balders', "the Clown, eight stone seven;" I never looked any further, and dash me if they don't tell me now he and all the talent went for his light-weighted Phantom colt. What a lark it is—eh, Annie?" and the old gentleman burst into a roar of laughter. "Anything you like, mamma, now," he cried, turning to Mrs. Dyson; "you may have your fling now to the end of the season, and I'll not grumble at the bills."

"The ring's proved true after all, Jack," whispered Annie.

A pressure of the hand was the only response; but in good earnest the Hussar felt a sense of intense relief.

"Now, Thistleton," cried the old gentleman, "let's see the ladies across to the Bibury stand, to get some luncheon—they won't let us in, you know, selfish dogs! they only entertain ladies—and then you and I will go over and forage amongst the Rifles; those fellows entertain the universe on this occasion, and I know two or three of 'em right well."

A meaning glance passed between the lovers; and as he left his *fiancée* at the door of the Bibury stand, Annie whispered, "Jack, I'm shocked at your dreadful worldly knowledge. I think if you get a chance, you might —that is if you care much about it, you know —speak to-day."

Old Mr. Dyson was in tremendous force when he got amongst the hospitable Riflemen, and would have fain told the story of his backing the Clown rather oftener than is fair,

even to the best-tempered audience — the audience too in this case having mostly come, more or less, to grief over the race. But after two or three repetitions, Jack insisted that they must really go and look after the ladies. On their way back to the Bibury stand, Jack boldly blurted out his story. The old gentleman was somewhat taken aback, but finally said bluntly he'd better talk to Annie. "I'll own," he said, "I had other intentions regarding her marriage; but my girl shall please herself, d—mme!"

As, at the conclusion of the day's sport, Jack placed his betrothed in the carriage, he slipped the ring once more into her hand, and whispered, "The charm has proved successful after all, Annie; wear it till I replace it by the golden circlet, which your father has now given his consent to my fitting your finger with."

"Pour la vie," murmured the girl with a warm pressure of the hand.

Jumping into the first fly that presented itself, Jack made the best of his way to the

railway station, better satisfied with the performance of Tom Balders' horses considerably than was that astute gentleman himself. He just caught the train, and was about to spring into a first-class carriage, when there smote upon his ear:

"Know Grueby—fellow they call Butcher Grueby—man who was in the Cambridge eleven?"

Jack stole silently away, and buried himself in the recesses of a second-class carriage, preferring to encounter the rough company therein, sooner than risk being encompassed by the tentacles of Rutterton's discourse.

A SNOW-PICNIC.

I.

Gazing out upon a thorough lead-coloured day in December is not inspiriting anywhere, but when the London atmosphere deepens its sombre hues, like the darkness of Egypt it becomes a thing that may be felt. All our follies and iniquities rise unbidden to our mind, and we feel we can solve Mr. Mallock's conundrum, of whether life is worth living, in the negative, offhand; answering it angrily, as a newly convicted malefactor might reply to the question whether he thought his "seven years" worth doing. Cyril Tennant, looking gloomily out upon Pall Mall, is experiencing all these sensations with peculiar intensity, and thinking that the worship of the sun is a creed

that a good deal might be said in favour of. It had been what he would have termed "a bad year with him all round." Disasters at Epsom had not been remedied at Ascot; quite the reverse, indeed; and though Cyril was heir to a fair property, and got on very well with his father as a rule, yet the authorities are given to exhibit crispness of temper at extraneous tugs at the purse-strings; and the required assistance had not been extended this time without the stipulation that Cyril should at once do his utmost to convert a certain Julia Malcolmson into Mrs. Cyril Tennant.

But Miss Malcolmson was much too shrewd a young woman not to see that her wooer was no whit in love with herself, whatever he might be with her money-bags. Though with no pretensions to beauty she was a good-hearted, unaffected girl, and rightly resented such a mockery of courtship as was Cyril's. She thought the young man deserved a lesson, and to discover that eligible, good-looking men of eight-and-twenty cannot throw the handkerchief where they please, was calculated to be

of service to him. She took care that he should propose, and also that his rejection should be pretty widely known. Cyril's heart was not much hurt by his refusal, but his vanity was, and that in some cases perhaps is a very fair equivalent. Women are quite aware of this, and avail themselves of such knowledge at times when they discover a delinquent staking counters against their own honest silver. But, curiously enough, old Mr. Tennant's vanity was almost as much wounded as his son's. He considered the Tennants fitted to mate with any in the land, and that the daughter of a defunct cotton-spinner should have the impertinence to refuse the heir to a baronetcy of James I.'s creation, was simply a horrible illustration of the fierce democratic wave now sweeping over these islands.

"D—n it, sir," said the choleric old gentleman, "I told you to marry a cotton-spinner's daughter once; I tell you now, never presume to bring home a wife who can't lay claim to good blood in her veins."

"What a beastly climate!" muttered Cyril,

still watching the cab-horses as they slipped and stumbled over the greasy wooden pavement; "and I suppose this is the sort of thing we shall have now right away to next June. I'd run away from it, upon my soul, if I only knew where to go. It's no use going home. I hate Rocksley when there's nothing to kill. Walking after wild partridges may be exercise, but it isn't amusing. While as for hunting, Doncaster proved too unkind for me even to think about it this year. I thought that brute Ishmael would have got a place, at all events."

Suddenly a man's step is heard on the stair, and a man's voice chanting a refrain to the air of "The Young May Moon."

"Some lunatic actually singing," observed Cyril.

> "Oh, what are you doing here, my son,
> In the snowy West ere the Derby's run,
> Ere the Ascot Cup is raced and won,
> Oh, what are you doing here, my son?"

was wafted through the door, followed by a sonorous rap upon its panels; another second,

and Cyril's rough "Come in" was responded to by the appearance of the vocalist, a tall, good-looking, devil-may-care, blonde man, some three or four years older than his host.

"I never can teach you to modulate your tones," exclaimed the new-comer. "As Jem Baggs was wont to remark, 'your woice is a horgan,' says he; that's what it is; it's an organ, but not a voice, when you're in the blues or out of temper. What's the cause of your particular growl this morning? Why come your dulcet accents apparently from the heels of your boots?"

"I should think the weather might pretty well account for it, let alone the irritation produced by finding a man such a fool to rejoice at it, and sing poems in praise of it."

"You never would have done anything at the Bar," retorted Tom Lorraine sententiously. "You have no idea of facts or logical sequence. You did not pay to my little hymn of thanksgiving the attention it deserved. I was lifting my sweet voice in gratitude that I am ordered

to leave these dark skies for the cold clear climate of the West. I am off to participate in all the fun and frolic of the Canadas, to ride in a sleigh, to upset in a treboggin, to 'soop her up' on the curling rink, and come countless headers on the skating one. 'Captain Lorraine will proceed from the depôt at Winchester to join the head-quarters of his battalion at Quebec.' So runs the regimental order, and Captain Lorraine is delighted. He has been out before, and knows all about it."

"Oh, Canada girls are fair, they say,
And that is the reason I've come this way,
And there's nothing in life like a ride in a sleigh,
And that is the reason I've come this way."

"Upon my soul, Tom, I almost envy you," rejoined Tennant, gazing with something akin to admiration at his mercurial friend; and really such buoyancy of spirits was a thing to marvel at, that dull, leaden December day.

"Ah," replied Lorraine, "if you don't quite, my son, take another look out of the window. Isn't that enough to make you sigh for clear, bright skies; then think of the snow that's

before you: it always snows now in January. Can anything be more pitiable than London in snow? And we don't, out there, really have many more snowy days than you have here, only we get a deal more down in the time. Then in the snow countries they know how to meet it; the houses are built for it, clothes made for it, sleighs ready for it, and not produced just as the thaw comes.

"'Of dancing if you're fond, and of snow-flakes little reck,
You may pass a pleasant winter in the city of Quebec,'"

sang Lorraine. "Camp song of the period," he continued, "but founded strictly on fact. Why the deuce shouldn't you come with me? There's no more shooting to be done; you left the hunters, I know, on Doncaster Town Moor; the first part of the London season is all east-wind, vanity, and vexation. You'll be back for Ascot; why not say 'done,' and sail with me next Saturday?"

"I declare I have half a mind to," said Cyril slowly.

"Now there's the advantage of the military profession," retorted Lorraine; "there's no

room for infirmity of purpose. Government makes up our minds for us. It saith to the centurion 'Go,' and he goeth, or the authorities will know the reason why. I *must* go, and you had better come too."

"Have a cigar while I think it over," said Cyril, as he pushed a box across, and once more looked moodily out at the weather. He reflected that things were not going very smoothly with him just at present. He was somewhat sore at the rebuff he had received from Miss Malcolmson, and the commiseration of some of his fair acquaintances was hard to stomach. He winced on being told that he had been infamously treated, that the lady had behaved abominably, and fancied he detected a covert vein of irony beneath the soft dulcet tones of the fair sympathizers. Then his father would not let the subject die away, but continued to trumpet forth his indignation upon all available occasions. In fact, Cyril was pretty constantly reminded of his failure just at present, and such memories are unpleasant to most of us. Absconding, though

offering an obvious relief to overhearing the discussion of our mistakes, is not practicable to most of us, but in his case it was. Bah! Why should he not throw England behind him, and spend the winter in the Great West?

"All right, Tom, I have made up my mind to go. I am rather tired of being pitied about Emily Malcolmson. She did not treat me very well, perhaps, but I bear her no malice, and honestly admit I, to some extent, deserved the snubbing I got. She preached me a regular homily on my dismissal, and wound up with 'wishing me every success when I should meet some one I loved better than myself, and could throw a little heart into my wooing.'"

"Well, you know, you were about the most leisurely lover I ever saw start for the matrimonial stakes. You'll have to put a good deal more steam on if you ever mean asking the question in Canada."

"Don't talk nonsense, Tom," replied Tennant irritably. "You know I only proposed to Emily Malcolmson to please my father."

"Yes, but another time you had better not let the young lady know it too."

"I'm not likely to ask the question again in a hurry. Dine here with me on Friday, and we'll go down to Liverpool together on Saturday morning."

"All right; and now good-bye. It don't matter to a confirmed bachelor like you, of course, but you'll find that—

> "There's nothing in life like a ride in a sleigh,
> And 'bout Canada girls the truth I say."

II.

That day fortnight saw Cyril Tennant duly ensconced in a barrack-room at Quebec. His friend Lorraine had easily procured permission for him to occupy a vacant quarter in the dingy old Louis-street barracks, and he had been made an honorary member of the mess of the —th. Lorraine's brother officers welcomed him cordially, and Cyril found himself treated

as quite one of themselves—in short, standing in the very pleasant position of being attached to a regiment, without being called upon to take a share of the duties or responsibilities. It was a new experience, this glimpse of the sunny side of a soldier's life, and the young man enjoyed it thoroughly. He entered, too, eagerly into all the winter amusements of the ancient snow-bound capital of the Canadas, and danced, curled, skated, and sleighed with the most energetic lot of Her Majesty's —th, and that regiment numbered many as restless and mercurial spirits among its officers as Lorraine.

He was standing one afternoon in the rink listening to the band and watching the skaters, when his attention was attracted by the graceful gyrations of two young ladies whom he had not seen before. Calling Lorraine's notice to them he inquired who they were.

"By Jove! what luck," replied that gentleman; "I didn't know she had come back. Just in time for our snow-picnic. That is Miss De Léry: about the nicest and prettiest

girl in the Lower Province. I knew her when I was out here before, but the other I'm beat about. No, stop, I have it; that must be her sister, little Bessie."

"Why call her little? She's as tall as her sister."

"Yes; but, you see, when I last saw her, rather more than two years ago, she was only a child of fourteen: they grow up and come out early here. I must go across, and say how do you do. Come along, and be introduced."

"Glad to see you back again amongst us, Captain Lorraine," said Miss De Léry, as she stretched her little hand out to welcome him. "We heard of your return up at Montreal, and were delighted to find that you adhered to your word of keeping up your skating. You can't do that properly in England; the only way is to come out here."

"Very pleased to find myself here again," rejoined Tom, "if only for the pleasure of meeting Miss De Léry; and this, I suppose, is Bessie? Bessie grown into a young lady,

and perhaps no longer permitting one to address her by her Christian name."

"Bessie to you, Captain Lorraine, always," rejoined the girl, laughing. "You have stood my friend in too many scrapes for it to be otherwise. Besides, I don't wish you to think that my passion for sweetmeats has in the least died out."

"I'll remember," retorted Lorraine, laughing, "but I suppose I must not stipulate for the old condition before presenting them; that you are to produce a certificate of three days' good behaviour from the authorities. Don't you recollect the day I called with a box of bonbons, and you were not even to be seen? —a New Year's day—being presumably in durance vile in the upper regions."

"Nonsense. I'd a bad cold, but any way my conduct now-a-days is all but faultless."

"Not much improved, I am afraid," interposed Miss De Léry, smiling.

"Oh, Bessie and I always had a little quiet fun between ourselves; but will you allow me in the first place to introduce my friend, Mr.

Tennant, to you (the young ladies bowed); and in the second, will you promise to come to our snow-picnic next week? I will take care a card shall be sent you in due form directly I get back to barracks."

"I shall be most happy. A snow-picnic is such fun. I presume you have some *chaperons*, for, as you know, my aunts are too old for that sort of thing, and I dare say I shall find a cavalier to drive me out."

"I hope you will allow me to have that honour," rejoined Lorraine. "You know of old, Miss De Léry, that I am a careful coachman. You've been under my charge before, and I hope you will trust yourself with me again."

"Oh, yes," replied the young lady, "but in the bygone days I remember I always especially barred a certain hot-headed chestnut being in the sleigh. I know nothing of your horses now, Captain Lorraine, but I must still stipulate that if there is anything resembling that petulant mare amongst them, that I am not to sit behind it."

"All right, Miss De Léry. I pledge my word that my nags shall be sedate, and properly behaved."

Cyril Tennant, meanwhile, had been cultivating an acquaintance with Bessie de Léry, and was not a little struck with his companion. She had none of the *gaucherie*, nor was she afflicted with the shyness or forwardness, that characterizes most English girls at that age. She was perfectly free and unaffected, and chatted away to him as if she had known him for months. The flashing dark eyes, the *riante* mouth, which ever and anon displayed the small white teeth, the ever-changing expression, and the thick masses of dusky hair gathered back on the well-shaped head, would have caught the eye of the greatest dullard to feminine beauty. But conjoined with that was the lithe supple figure of an English girl of eighteen and those small well-turned feet and ankles for which the French Canadians are somewhat famous. There could be no two words about it, Bessie de Léry was an uncommonly pretty girl, bidding fair, in short,

to eclipse her sister, and Madeline was counted a leading belle of the Lower Province, and could have held her own in any ball-room.

"You are coming, of course, to the snow-picnic the —th are giving next week," observed Cyril at last.

"No, I think not; I only wish I was. I have never been at one, and they *are* such fun. You all sleigh out, you know, to some farm-house about ten or twelve miles out, and then you have a cold dinner, and afterwards, while the men clear the room, the ladies make tea in another, and then you dance till it is time to drive home again."

"But why cannot you come? I heard Lorraine tell your sister he should send you a card directly he got home."

"Oh, I'm not out. In this country, you see, we don't come out formally; we creep out. I'm creeping now, but I've not crept far enough to be allowed to go to a snow-picnic."

"I wish you could manage it. I should be so very pleased to drive you if permitted," replied Cyril.

"No, would you! How good of you!" replied the girl. "But I'm afraid my aunts wouldn't let me; they will say I'm too young;" and Bessie's bright face was for a few seconds clouded at the idea of such a day's pleasure being just beyond her compassing. Suddenly her countenance brightened as she exclaimed, "If you ask Captain Lorraine to beg very hard for me, he's such a favourite with my aunts, perhaps they'll let me go."

"And if you get leave, you will come with me?"

"Only too glad, Mr. Tennant; but tell Captain Lorraine he must plead his best, or I shall have to stay at home."

"Come along, Bessie, it's time we went,' interposed Miss De Léry. "I shall depend upon you, Captain Lorraine, for Wednesday."

Bessie threw a queer little glance of piteous appeal to Cyril to remind him of his promise as she said good-bye. She did not quite like to prefer her petition to Lorraine before Madeline, as though the two were very fond of each other, yet elder sisters are apt to check

precocity on the part of the younger ones, especially with regard to "coming out." Had it not been for that Bessie would not have hesitated to appeal to Lorraine herself.

"I tell you what, Tom, I want your assistance about this picnic," said Cyril as they wended their way back to the Louis-street barracks. "First, Miss Bessie says her only chance of getting leave to go to it lies with you. Her aunts, it seems, like other deluded persons, believe in you immensely, and are likely to be persuaded by your plausible tongue; I have promised you shall wheedle your best, if requisite, in her behalf."

"The old ladies and myself are excellent friends," replied Lorraine, "and of course they must let Bessie go. It would be too cruel on a girl of her age to place a veto on her going to a snow-picnic. I'll talk to them to-morrow. Why, it's the most delicious combination of sleighing and dancing that ever made a maiden's pulses tingle. No, Bessie must not be done out of her first frolic of the kind. Anything else I can do for your mightiness?"

"Yes, lend me a horse and sleigh."

"You can take Kathleen if you like and the carriole. Oddly enough, Miss De Léry, whom I am going to drive, stipulated that I should have quiet horses. Now I had Kathleen when I was out here before, and though there's no real harm in her, you know, she dances about at starting and pulls a little. Miss De Léry, who is always nervous on either runners or wheels, invariably barred that mare, so I can't use her. But if you don't keep her standing, jump in quick, and keep tight hold of her head for the first mile or so, she's quiet enough."

"I suppose she really is fit to drive a lady with," said Cyril; "but there is a good deal of 'if' about her character."

"Certainly, I have driven several with her in the sleigh, but she won't stand, and is fretful at starting. She frightens a nervous woman, but Bessie de Léry (I suppose you mean driving her?) has plenty of pluck. Besides, you can't come to serious grief in a carriole, you are so close to the ground, re-

member; a roll in the snow is the worst that can come to you."

"All right, then, I'll drive Kathleen. Don't forget your mission to-morrow: there goes the dressing bugle."

III.

A SUPERB Canadian day in January, a bright sun, not a breath of air, the thermometer at zero, and the snow crisp as biscuits. What a day for sleighing! What a day for a snow-picnic! Merrily tinkled the bells as every equipage the —th could muster whirled round the town to pick up as many of their guests as they could manage. There was the regimental drag—I don't mean coach, but its substitute on runners—tandem sleighs, single sleighs, "cutters," and carrioles: low piratical craft, these last, that no rebuff nor accident ever annihilated. Pretty faces peeped out from beneath the buffalo robes, and bright eyes grew brighter as their owners drank in

the clear champagny air. What a drive it was, as they sped noiselessly along over the blanched causeway. The tops of the hedges were barely visible, and the drift in places palpably pretty deep, evident to the most inexperienced that if you got off the beaten track your horse must be floundering in deep snow, and that a turn-over would be more than probable. What badinage was flung from sleigh to sleigh as occasionally some of the clippers overhauled the more steady-going craft, and great was Tom Lorraine's wrath as, with Bessie de Léry's laughing face just peering over the buffalo robes, Kathleen and the carriole swept past the more dignified sleigh in which he was driving Madeline. Tom would not have submitted to this indignity, heightened as it was by the saucy clapping of Bessie's hands, which emerged from her coverings for the occasion. There would have been a race had a less nervous lady been his companion, but Miss de Léry, as he well knew, disliked such freaks. It was just as well, for Kathleen, in her way, took a

deal of beating. She was no use much at a trot, but slipped over the ground in an easy hand-canter, which on runners makes no more difference than it would in a four-wheeled carriage in England.

At last they arrive at a large wood-built farmhouse at Montmorenci. Horses are taken out, hampers unpacked, the board is spread, and the revel begins. The band having practically ascertained that there is no stoppage in their own throats begin to gurgle low notes through their instruments, I presume to satisfy themselves that, unlike Munchausen's famous trumpet, the tunes are not frozen therein. Clear the decks, boil the kettle, ladies, away with the dirty plates, the *débris* of the feast, the chairs, the tables; a cup of tea, and now

"We'll up and we'll gi'e them a blaw, a blaw."

Strike up the Lancers, and hand out your partners, Messieurs. How Bessie's eyes glisten as Cyril leads her out for the dance.

It is the girl's first real ball so to speak, and

she has thrown herself into it *con amore*. She has enjoyed the drive, is delighted with her cavalier, and is grateful to him besides, for is not all this fun of his providing, and can anything, she thinks, be more delightful than a snow-picnic? Valse follows valse, and quadrilles gradually fade out of the programme, but at last one or two of the matrons of the party suggest that it is time to get out the sleighs again. The shutters are thrown open, and the moonlight floods the room, putting the candles to shame; the heavens are all bejewelled, the trees decked in ermine, the earth glad in her bridal robes, and not a breath of air stirs the solemn stillness of the night. Then comes once more the merry tinkle of the bells as the sleighs come round, the muffled tread of the horses' hoofs on the frosty ground, and the light, musical, girlish laughter as the fair guests swathe themselves once more in their furs for the homeward drive.

"You will be ready when I come for you, Miss Bessie," said Cyril; "remember ours is a fractious steed, and given to bad manners if

kept waiting. I do hope you have enjoyed your evening."

"It has been delightful, and I have to thank you for it. I will be all ready and jump in quick. Oh, no, monsieur, I do not forget the instructions of the morning."

Lorraine drives off with Miss De Léry, and then, in obedience to a signal from Cyril, Bessie runs quickly down the entrance steps and springs lightly into the carriole. Kathleen is on her hind legs, and evidently prepared to delight the public with her vagaries, but upon feeling her head let go she darts forward and breaks at once into a gallop. They whirl safely by one or two sleighs, but the road narrows, and Cyril finding he can hardly hold the mare shouts to Lorraine, the only one left in front of him, to pull on one side and let him pass. Tom knows what Kathleen is on these occasions, and promptly complies.

"There's bagging your right and left on the first,
There's 'setting the field' in a rattling burst,
There's racing, there's cricket; but all, they say,
Can't at all compare with a ride in a sleigh,"

chanted Tom, as the carriole swept by him. "Don't be frightened, Miss De Léry, Tennant knows what he's about, and Bessie is in no sort of danger. The mare will sober down in the course of a mile or so."

Lorraine proved a true prophet, and it was rather fortunate that he did so, for Kathleen had not long settled down into the slinging trot of a respectable sleigh horse when they encountered a wood sledge, slowly plodding along the crown of the causeway, under the guidance of a belated and slightly intoxicated *habitant*. To Cyril's holloa to him to pull on one side and let him pass he responded with a brutal laugh, and an intimation in broken English that the road was as much his as any one else's, and that if Cyril wanted to pass he might pull on one side himself.

As the sledge proprietor was in the very centre of the road this was impossible, without getting into the deep snow.

Once more Cyril requested him to pull on one side: the sole response was an idiotic guffaw.

"You won't mind holding the mare a moment, I am sure," said Tennant, quickly; "see, she's quiet now. Sit quite still, and walk her past that sledge when I tell you to. Promise you'll not scream or get nervous if I have to pitch that half-drunken brute into the snow. Can I trust you?"

"I'll do my best, but—but you're not going to fight, Mr. Tennant; oh, please don't."

"No, Bessie," rejoined Cyril, "it'll hardly be a fight, but mind, be ready to do as I tell you."

He jumped out, advanced quickly to the head of the peasant's horse, and pulled him sharply across to the right. As he did so the proprietor stood up in front of his sledge and aimed a savage blow at Cyril with his whip. Then Bessie saw her cavalier drop the bridle and rush in; there was a confused struggle for a minute, and then the *habitant's* whip flew in one direction and the *habitant* disappeared into the deep snow in another. He emerged in a minute, and growling out savage expletives between his set teeth, rushed at his

opponent. Cyril stood calm and collected till his antagonist got well within distance, and then his left hand shot out straight and hard from the shoulder, and the infuriated peasant dropped in his tracks like a log.

Cyril gazed for a few seconds at his fallen adversary, and then, drawing the sledge on one side, said quietly, "You can pass now, Miss Bessie."

"Have you killed him, do you think?" asked the girl in awe-struck tones, as Cyril resumed his place by her side.

"No," he answered, laughing. "The half-drunken brute will pick himself up again in a minute or two, but I don't think Tom Lorraine will find it necessary to knock him down. I fancy he will take his sledge out of the way the next time he is requested to."

Cyril Tennant was in high spirits all the way home. There is always something exhilarating in getting the best of our enemies, but there must be a feeling of much satisfaction glowing in the breast when a debt of insolence has been promptly wiped out by a

clean knock-down blow. No wonder Bessie thought her cavalier charming, and as she bade him good night, honestly meant what she said when she thanked him for one of the pleasantest days of her life.

From this out, Cyril Tennant became a constant visitor at the De Lérys. Bessie, as girls of her age will do, had magnified him into a hero. What epithet she might have attached to the exploit of knocking down a drunken peasant I should be afraid to conjecture. At all events, he had become the object of her girlish admiration, and she showed it more openly than she would have done a little later on.

This was in the first instance very soothing to Cyril's vanity; he was still smarting under Miss Malcolmson's sharp rebuff, and felt attracted to this girl who believed in him to such an unlimited extent. But very soon the tables were turned; he fell honestly over head and ears in love with Bessie, and the little gipsy speedily arrived at the knowledge of that fact. It was laughable to see her ex-

ercising her power in a little imperious fashion all her own, and with all the delicious caprice of her sex.

"I say, Tom," blurted out Cyril one morning abruptly as he lounged into his friend's room, "what was old De Léry. Of course I know he is dead, but what was he?"

"Something in trade I fancy, but why?" replied Captain Lorraine.

"Because I've done it, old man. Bessie de Léry has promised to be my wife, and I must break the matter to the governor, you know. He's got an animosity towards trade ever since the Malcolmsons declined an alliance with the family."

"Ah, young man, as I poetically informed you some months ago, Canada girls are held to be rather nice. I congratulate you, Cyril, with all my heart. Pooh, man! in a colony, everybody, except your Government officials, is in business of some kind, but as De Léry père is dead there is no necessity for going into what was his peculiar line. If you want blood, the De Lérys, like lots of other people

out here, are descended from the best blood in France. Their ancestors were noble long before you mounted 'the bloody hand.' Tell the governor that, and if that don't convince him you can just add—

'That there's nothing in life like a ride in a sleigh,
And Canada girls are fair, they say.'"

A RIDE OVER BALLYCORÈE.

THE fiddles are playing their quickest and merriest: fragments of flower, flounce, and furbelow strew the floor of the grand jury-room in the Ennis Court-house, as the couples come best pace "down the middle" in the final country dance. That it has been a capital ball every one is agreed, and the gay, romping measure that finishes the evening attests to "the go" of the entertainment. Quick though the band may play, the light-footed belles of the West keep time to the music, and the hands across and poussetting are stepped with as much vigour as if the dancers were just beginning. But the air finishes at last with a crash, and God save the Queen rings out the knell of the Ennis ball.

"Won't you wish me luck over Ballycorèe to-morrow, Miss O'Moore?" said a tall, good-looking young fellow with a blonde moustache, as he carefully packed his sprightly partner into her carriage.

"That's asking a good deal, Captain Anson," rejoined the girl, laughing, "requiring me to wish success to the Saxon. Do you think I've no patriotism? I'll strain my conscience, though, a bit in your favour; I'm a Galway girl, you know. Well, if Galway has nothing going, I'll wish you success against Clare and Limerick."

"Very many thanks. As far as I know, your county don't mean to put in an appearance, so that you can back me and Molly Bawn with a clear conscience. You are coming out to see it?"

"As if a Galway girl would miss 'a wall meeting.' Mind Molly Bawn lands me gloves enough to see me through the winter. Good night."

"Arrah, Captain, do you call flirting disgracefully till near three in the morning the

way to train for two miles over stone walls next day? but you're a hardened offender, and I'll go bail it'll not bother your rest."

"Never fear, doctor; but I've got a trap. Let me take you as far as Carmody's—there's safe to be a lot of men there, chaffing over to-morrow's races. Jump up."

"Devil a doubt; loosening their tongues and lubricating their throats with 'the crathur' in divers forms. I'm your man. I'd like to hear what they say about the Post Entry Catch-weight Steeple-chase. It was a great idea of Tom McDonnell's, because, though you can guess a good deal, you can't quite tell what there may be in it." And so saying, Dr. Finnigan seated himself comfortably on the outside car.

He was a plump, black-eyed little man, whose popularity in the town was unbounded —a man of varied attainments, equally at home in singing a song or setting a collar-bone; with, as he said himself, a natural talent for the mixing of sedatives; which, being interpreted, meant the judicious blending of

whiskey, lemons, hot water, and sugar. He bore the reputation of being almost as clever with horses as he was with humanity, and treated a curb as judiciously as he did the gout. He was a firm believer in the *vin du pays* of the West, and held stoutly that if you didn't mix your whiskey too strong there was no necessity for counting the tumblers.

A few minutes, and the driver pulls up at the door of Carmody's Hotel. Carmody's has evidently abandoned all intention of going to bed—the lights gleam brightly across the High Street, and the confusion of tongues and peals of laughter proceeding from the coffee-room indicate no signs of drowsiness amongst those collected within. Anson and Doctor Finnigan push open the door and enter a somewhat low and sombre apartment, but now lit with numerous candles in addition to the gas, while scattered around the table and fireplace are a score or so of men in somewhat varied attire. Several of them, like the new-comers, are clad in orthodox evening dress, and have evidently come on from the ball, but the others are

in morning costume; and it is clear, from their habiliments and manners, have no pretensions to be called gentlemen. Keen sportsmen these, who troubled their heads little about the hunt ball, but looked forward to the hunt steeple-chases with much interest. A prominent member of these latter is a lithe wiry man, rather under middle height, with a keen grey eye, and not a superfluous ounce of flesh about him; close-shaved, thin-lipped, with a firm, resolute mouth—not a man a physiognomist would say that you might hope to get the better of. He was dressed in a single-breasted, dark riding coat, brown cord breeches, and butcher-boots, while his light, neatly-tied scarf was secured by an ordinary fox's tooth breast-pin. Miles Donovan was a horse-dealer by profession, and often rode as a gentleman across country in parts where the stewards did not inquire too strictly about his claims to be considered as such.

"Halloa, Anson," exclaimed a good-looking, florid man, who was smoking a cigar near the fireplace; "how is it Molly Bawn is not

entered for the Hunt Chase? I thought you were certain to give her a gallop over Ballycorèe."

"So I shall, Westropp," rejoined the soldier; "but your old horse, Moonraker, and one or two others, are a little too good for me in the Hunt, I think. I kept her for a shy at the Post Entry Chase."

"Faith, Captain," exclaimed Donovan, "I wouldn't wonder av the company was better in that than the other."

"Perhaps so, but at all events it's not so far to travel; it is only two miles instead of three, and I think that will be far enough for my mare."

"You're right, sir," replied the horse-dealer; "it's far enough for home-trained horses as a rule, and Ballycorèe's a stiff course.

"Och, 'the Ward Men' they prate pretty loud
Of their deeds around Dublin so gay,
And brag that to shake off the crowd
There's nought like the 'Lough of the Bay;'
But just let 'em come down to Clare,
These bruisers, and then we will see,
By mee sowl, it'll be mighty quare
If they 'set' us o'er Ballycorèe."

A roar of laughter greeted Mr. Donovan's burst of melody, for the "Lough of the Bay" is a famous water-jump in the Ward Union country, the depths of which have been explored by many a hard rider, still the West of Ireland men know that their stone walls are mighty mysteries to horses not accustomed to them.

"An' what are the Galway men going to run for the Post Entry Race? Does any one know at all? It's an open affair, so I'm thinking they're like to have a cut in," continued Miles. "Ah, Pat," he ejaculated to the waiter, who just then entered the room, "another bowl of punch like the last; and remind Miss Casey to be aisy with the sugar."

"As far as I know, Galway has sent nothing. Whether they'd nothing to send, or whether the race was not sufficiently known, I can't say; but I'm pretty certain there's nothing from our side," rejoined Charlie O'Moore, a brother of the young lady who had wished Captain Anson that qualified success,

and a well-known front-rank man with the "Blazers."

"That's quare," said Mr. Donovan. "I'm thinking of running a little bay horse myself. There'd be no objection, Mr. Westropp, I suppose?"

"I'm not a steward; but I should think not. Is it anything good?"

"Sorra a bit. You've most of you seen him; there's the Captain, for one, 'll have the foot of me, and two or three more, no doubt; but you can't put mine down over walls, and half the hunt will be wanting to buy him after the race, win or lose."

"You'll find Molly Bawn can jump walls, too," exclaimed Anson, a little nettled.

"She's purty fair," replied the horse-dealer carelessly, "but mine beats her over Ballycorèe to-morrow for a tenner."

"That don't sound as if you thought the Captain had the foot of you," exclaimed Doctor Finnigan.

"No," returned Miles Donovan; "and yet I'll make not only that bet, but stake another

tenner Molly Bawn beats my horse two miles on the flat at the identical weights we ride to-morrow, whatever they are; and you shall put up whom you like on him."

"Never mind the second, I'll bet you the first ten pounds, Donovan," said Anson, quietly. "Now what are you going on?"

"Nothing more, sir," rejoined Miles, "than that I consider myself and my horse better than you and yours over a wall country."

Captain Anson gave a somewhat incredulous smile. He was quartered at Clare Castle, only a couple of miles from Ennis, and had been hunting Molly Bawn with the Clare hounds for the last three months, and that distinguished quadruped had acquitted herself in the most exemplary fashion all that time. The Captain had held his own fairly with the best men in the hunt, and if there were two or three whom he acknowledged usually had the best of him in anything like a quick thing, he attributed it entirely to their having the luck to possess rather faster nags than himself. The astute horse-dealer, who had often seen

Molly Bawn and her owner "go," drew a different conclusion, and had quite made up his mind to give a tidy price for that mare should she come into the market. He held that the Captain, though a good horseman, was new to stone walls, and, in consequence, somewhat slow over the Clare country, and that by cautious riding he had taught Molly Bawn to dwell most unnecessarily at her leaps.

"Ah, here's the punch! More power to you, Miss Casey; it's an iligant knack ye have for mingling the materials. Clean glasses, Patsy, quick! Docther, it's yourself's the best judge in the country. Just thry a tumbler. Captain, if I may make so bould, ye'll just drink success to the mare, and confusion to poor Red Robin."

"No," said Anson, laughing, as he took the steaming tumbler the horse-dealer proffered. "Here's a good race, Donovan, and may the best of us two win."

"You're right, Miles, Miss Casey is an expert. She's a pupil of my own, and does

credit to her teacher and country. It'd be worth driving from Limerick in February to sip such tipple as that at the end of it," exclaimed Dr. Finnigan.

"Ah! what about Mr. McDonnell," suddenly exclaimed Donovan. "He'll be mighty busy in both races, I warrant. There's no better horseman in all the West. Nobody iver remembers him without something that could gallop; and as for jumps, they all have to do that with him. I sold him a devil oncest I could make nothing of, and six months afterwards saw him land it over a five-foot wall as easy as we'd put our best hunter over a sheep-hurdle."

"I quite agree with you, Miles," said Mr. Westropp. "He's both the best and boldest rider in the county, and I don't think you can match him in Galway; eh, O'Moore?"

"Can't quite admit that," said O'Moore, laughing; "but I'll give in we can't beat him. Isn't that conceding a good deal, Doctor?"

"Bedad, when a Galway man admits any

one outside his county can ride within 7 lbs. of the worst man in it, he's either starting for a better world or intent upon making a match," replied the Doctor, as he finished his tumbler.

"An' what about Mr. McDonnell?" reiterated Miles Donovan.

"He's real unlucky; he's got influenza into his stable, and all his horses are coughing; he's not even one he can hunt. He was clean down about it to-night; said he'd never missed being in a scurry over Ballycorèe since he was nineteen, and that it would be sadly slow to merely come out and look on."

"And how his wife laughed at his solemn face," chuckled the Doctor, "as she said, 'Never mind, Tom, we'll have a look through the colts in the straw-yard in the morning, and we'll find something most likely that will give you a ride, and be the better for schooling.'"

"An' what did Mr. McDonnell say?" inquired Donovan, earnestly.

"Laughed, and told her not to show her

anxiety to be quit of him quite so transparently."

"The mistress said that?" muttered the horse-dealer, musingly. "She's a mighty clever woman, Mrs. McDonnell; with the most beautiful hands I ever saw."

"She has," chimed in Anson; "takes five-and-three-quarters. I lost a dozen of gloves to her not a month ago!"

Donovan grinned, as he replied—"Like enough, Captain; but it was hands on a bridle I meant. Faith, that horse I was mentioning I could do nothing with just now! Mr. McDonnell tould me it was the misthress that made him. As he said, they go for her coaxing, Miles, when they won't for mine." And here the horse-dealer relapsed into abstraction.

"By the way, your sister is staying with the McDonnells, O'Moore, is she not?" inquired Westropp.

"Yes," replied the other, smiling; "and rather distressed that neither her host nor her county are to be represented to-morrow."

Anson said nothing, but inwardly hoped he had succeeded in awaking some interest in Miss O'Moore's heart concerning the next day's tournament, or—considering that the clock had chimed three—this day's would be the more proper expression.

The punch had by this made an impression even on the hard-headed congregation assembled in the coffee-room of Carmody's Hotel. Tongues were riotous, and there was considerable wagering for modest sums on the forthcoming races. The Post Entrance Steeplechase, curiously enough, attracted most attention of the three events to be decided. Molly Bawn was backed with some spirit by her owner and one or two more of the soldiers, while amongst the rougher lot in morning costume there was a hankering to back Red Robin; Mr. Westropp's My Mary was also fancied by her owner and Dr. Finnigan.

Miles Donovan had sat singularly silent for the last ten minutes, a most unusual circumstance with him when anything connected with horses was under discussion, more especially

when the discussion was accompanied by the laying of wagers. He seemed as if trying to make out something that puzzled him, and, judging from his countenance, with indifferent success; but suddenly his attention was apparently arrested by Anson accepting some offer against his mare.

"I'll bet you a level tenner, Captain," he exclaimed, "that Mr. McDonnell beats you to-morrow."

"What nonsense," rejoined Anson. "We all know McDonnell's horses are all coughing, and he has nothing to run."

"Put it this way then, sir: I'll bet ten pounds even Mr. McDonnell runs a horse to-morrow, and another ten pounds that he beats you."

"I tell you it is giving me twenty pounds, Miles. It would be robbery to take your money."

"Faith, Captain, you're the only man ever paid me that compliment yet," rejoined the horse-dealer, laughing, "and I'd as leave you took it, if you can win it, as any one. But

I'll never believe Mr. McDonnell won't find something to ride over Ballycorèe to-morrow. Out of respect to Dr. Finnigan he's bound to have a spin over about the stiffest course in all the West."

"Pooh! Miles, it makes mighty little difference. Tom McDonnell's not constructed like other people. Either that or he's reduced the art of falling to a science; he never breaks himself, however ugly the place may be."

"Will any one have my bets?" interposed the horse-dealer doggedly.

"If you still insist upon making them I will bet you the money," said Anson; "but you had best leave them alone."

"Put them down, Captain. You needn't be shy of winning my money. If a man in my profession can't take tidy care of himself, it's no use any one else thinking to look after him. Rabbits is nothing to the way he'll be skinned."

Having apparently relieved his mind by these two injudicious bets, Mr. Donovan turned his attention in the first place, to the punch,

and then to the general conversation, which whenever it alluded in terms of disparagement to Red Robin, caused Mr. Donovan to vociferously offer to back that "little horse" for divers small sums. Miles and a select band of seasoned vessels indeed continued to discuss punch, horses, and steeplechases for a good couple of hours after Anson, O'Moore, the Doctor, &c., had retired; and, in fact, it was getting near the dawning before these stout topers cried *quantum suff.*

* * * * *

A soft grey November morning, about which there is usually much suspicion in the west of Ireland. True, at times the sun breaks through about twelve, and you have a lovely three or four hours of steaming, glittering warmth, only too delicious; but more often the grey sky thickens, heavy, vaporous clouds bank up to windward, and a damp, drizzling, depressing day is the result. Miles Donovan, with whom whiskey seems a compensation for sleep, and who is devouring ham and eggs in the tobacco-reeking coffee-room as

if he had never made a hole in a hogshead, comes to the conclusion that the day will do. So also does Arthur Anson, as he takes a look over the straggling village of Clare preparatory to plunging into his bath, and so also thinks pretty Kate McDonnell, as she presides over her breakfast table some three miles or so further up the Limerick road than "The Castle," as the barrack of the soldiery is called.

"No fear, Bessie," she cries, gleefully turning to her guest. "We may sport our prettiest bonnets, and generally dress for universal destruction. It's going to be a lovely day."

"Ah!" rejoined Miss O'Moore, gaily; "and the day is not to have sole prerogative on that point. We also will don our sunbeams, and clothe ourselves in loveliness."

"Quite so. I have ordered the car for half-past twelve, Tom; is that time enough?"

"Hardly—make it twelve sharp," replied her husband. "The first race is set for half-past one, and it will take us close upon an hour to get there."

"Very good, my lord. I'm off now to see there's a satisfactory lunch put into the well. Final glance in the glass, Bessie, remember, at five minutes to noon."

Miss O'Moore nodded, and did not forget that last look, we may be sure. A woman never does under such circumstances.

When the McDonnells had got as far as Ennis they found themselves entangled in the stream that was pouring out towards Ballycorèe, for the race-course lay some three miles beyond that city, on the Galway side. Phaeton, barouche, dog-cart, and even turf-wagon, to say nothing of sturdy bare-footed pedestrians, men on horses with ramshackle accoutrements, and peasant lasses, whose short petticoats allowed liberal criticism of their ankles, thronged towards the well-known ground, but the favourite mode of progression was undoubtedly the jaunting car.

"Let lovers praise the moon's soft rays,
The falling dew, or the rising star,
The streamlet's side at the even-tide,
But give me the side of a jaunting-car."

"Ah, me! they're right; but it's the devil's own business, that driving home in the gloaming after lunch," muttered Dr. Finnigan, meditatively, as he thought of Lover's song. "One gets so timid they'll be bumped off, the darlints, that your arm's round a waist almost unbeknown to you."

But now a gateway from which the barriers have been removed allows access to a large field abutting on the road; crossing this and another of similar size, the public arrive at a slightly elevated ridge, along which the various vehicles are ranging themselves. A roughly erected wooden building does duty for a steward's stand, while a little box of similar material at the further corner is dedicated to the Rhadamanthus of the race-course. At the back of the ridge are a line of tents, within which whiskey, mild roulette, and a soupçon of fighting rage during the afternoon, but it all comes under the head of "divarsion," and paternal legislation was still in its infancy in these parts. The sun has triumphed over the mist for the time most completely, and

the day turned out one of those we sometimes meet in November, which, for the two or three hours they are at their best, make us think it is yet but the beginning of autumn.

"Good morning, Captain Anson," said Mrs. McDonnell, as the car, having arrived at a safe haven, the soldier came up and made his obeisance.

"None the worse for last night's dancing, I think I may safely assume," replied Anson, as he shook hands. "What a day for my ride, Miss O'Moore, eh? One may not 'do for Galway,' you know, but no one could help making a big bid such an afternoon. There will be no credit in riding straight to-day—there's so much ozone about one can't help it."

"Quite right," replied Mrs. McDonnell, with mock gravity, "it's walking straight will deserve laurels this afternoon. The ozone below here"—and she jerked her head towards the tents behind her—"is plentiful, exhilarating, doubtless, but too rarefied to promote that steady homeward plodding of his weary way, Gray so beautifully suggests."

"A truce to your badinage, Katie," cried Miss O'Moore. "Explain my programme to me, Captain Anson. This first race begins directly, does it not?"

"Yes, that is 'the Farmers' Scurry,' and then you are allowed three-quarters of an hour to lunch before the nominal race of the day—the Hunt Steeplechase—but the excitement has so grown about the Catch Weights that really I think that is the event about which people are chiefly interested."

"And when shall you know what will run?"

"Of course we know most of them now, but entries are to be officially made after the termination of the first race, and there may be another or two we have no idea of."

"And you are still confident?" inquired Miss O'Moore.

"Fairly so, if I've luck. Miles Donovan, the horse-dealer, and Westropp will, I fancy, be my most dangerous opponents."

"And the course?" asked the young lady.

"We start at that red pole just below the stand. You can follow the white flags up to

that bush, can you not? There some others bend off to the left over that slight rise and go out of sight; that is the three-mile course, but we keep to the right round the base of the rise, and finish in front of the stand. Nearly all grass and nothing but walls, bar two fences."

"A Galway course, my dear," cried Kate McDonnell, laughing, "and never a Galway man had the pluck to put in an appearance."

"They did not get notice enough," retorted Miss O'Moore, "or else I think my brother for one would have gone for a ride over Ballycorèe.

"I must say good-bye for a little," said Anson, as the first race terminated. "I have to see about entering for the 'Catch Weights.'"

"Excellent," said Mrs. McDonnell. "Forage for news for *us* and Bessie and I will forage for food for you meanwhile in the well. Don't be late for lunch. Sure ye'd better ride overweight than be wakely, yer honour," concluded the lady, gaily. She had the slightest possible touch of the brogue in her ordinary converse, but, like most well-bred

women of her country, could use the vernacular when she listed.

When Anson arrived at the Stewards' stand he found the entering for the Catch Weights had already begun. Mr. Donovan had nominated Red Robin, Mr. Westropp My Mary, and some half-dozen other nominations had also been made, two not altogether expected, but they were well-known animals, and not considered of very much account. It only wanted five minutes to the saddling-bell for the second race, after which time no further entries could be accepted for the concluding steeplechase. Nobody had come forward for the last quarter of an hour, and Anson thought he might as well make his way back to Mrs. McDonnell, and lunch.

"Faix, Captain, but it strikes me you've got me for oncest," said Miles Donovan, as he too turned on his heel, and made his way to the ridge. "Did ye see Mr. McDonnell at all the day?"

"Yes, he drove his wife and Miss O'Moore here, but I've not set eyes on him since.

I'm going now to get some lunch at their car."

"My respects to the misthress, plaze. I'd a maggot in my head last night, I'm thinking. No matther, I'll have to do my best on Red Robin, and Mr. McDonnell's a dangerous customer out of the way, anny how. Glory be to God." And so saying Miles Donovan made his way to the tents in search of something to eat.

It wanted but three minutes to the saddling bell. The stewards, fatigued with their arduous duties, were recuperating upon chicken, tongue, and Pommery and Greno, when suddenly a voice from below their *estrade* exclaimed—

"Gentlemen! Yez honours! Sors!"

One of the officials looked over and became cognizant of a man with a small, mean, rough-coated little horse, which he led by a heavy, uncleaned snaffle-bridle. The pair were originals. The man apparently a very small farmer, with a shock head of red hair and roguish grey eyes, was a very gem of his class.

Clad in the orthodox fashion, namely, a tall beaver hat, high shirt collars, reaching half way up his cheeks, a gaudy Barcelona neckerchief, a loosely made hammer claw frieze coat, of which the tails were of portentous length, rather baggy cord knee breeches, with leggings to match, and an unmistakable aspect of having a dhrop in him, he was the beau-ideal of a rollicking Patlander.

"What do you want, my man?" inquired the official.

"Iz ye one of the stewards, sir?" rejoined he of the frieze coat, as he tilted the tall beaver hat a little more back upon his red poll.

"Yes. What is it? Look sharp, I'm at luncheon."

"Small blame to yer honour, it's meeself wishes I was too."

"It strikes me you have been, and stayed a little longer than was good for you."

"Ah, ye will have your joke, Misther Fitzgerald, and 'deed there's few of us could dhrink glass for glass with your honour."

"Well, you'd best be off now."

"But, sor, I'm thinking of entering the little horse for the what d'ye call it—sure it's the Posth Intry I mane."

"Pooh, nonsense. It's not meant for garrons like that."

"Garron. Holy Moses! Let me just put him in a kyar, an' av he don't kick, an' nothing breaks, the divvle a mile ye'll ever go faster in harness, an' ye'll take a sate."

"Absurd; this is a cross-country race."

"An' what would I be wanting to put him in for if it wasn't. Isn't he just beautiful over the walls, and wouldn't a little house or two in the way just make it a certainty for him."

By this time, as may be easily imagined, a little crowd had collected in front of the stand, and the other stewards had joined their *confrère* on the balcony.

"Musha, an' why wouldn't he be let run the pony? It's open to anny one, Misther Fitzgerald, I'm thinking," cried a gentleman with a tall beaver hat and a huge frieze overcoat reaching to his heels

"But you don't really mean you want to enter that horse you have with you?" exclaimed the somewhat perplexed official. "What do you call him?"

"Well, I'd call him a pony meeself, as he's a thrifle undersized; but Rory's good av he's little."

"An' what do you call yourself?"

"A mighty dacent boy, whose attractions arn't properly appreciated. They do call me Tim Cassidy when they want me at the assizes."

"Which no doubt is pretty frequently. What were you wanted there for last?"

"'Deed, I don't know, as I niver went to see; it'd be to serve on the Grand Jury, most likely," and the demure manner, joined with the twinkle in the man's eye as he gave utterance to this last rejoinder, sent his auditors, both in the stand and on the course, into a fit of laughter.

"Well, Mr. Cassidy, I think it a piece of preposterous nonsense your wanting to run such an animal as that."

"Shure, yer honour's never seen Rory go," interposed his owner.

"But, as owing to the race being thrown thoroughly open to any one, we can see no grounds to refuse you, I suppose we must take your nomination. Now then, what am I to put down?"

The man hesitated, fumbled first with his shirt collars, and then taking off his tall beaver hat, began slowly smoothing it with his hand. "Shure, yer honour," he said at last, "I don't wish to spoil sport; if the gentlemen are afraid of the pony, may be I'd better not run him. He's a well-topped horse, and mighty clever is Rory."

"Pooh! that's not what I mean; only by blundering at the first fence or two you may upset, or otherwise put somebody's chance out."

"'Deed, if anny of them blunder it won't be Rory. Divil a fear of his making a mistake."

"Well, I've entered Mr. Timothy Cassidy's brown gelding, Rory; is that right?"

"Yes, yer honour; but I see Misther Westropp up there, and I don't want to offend him."

"Very good of you, my man," rejoined Westropp, laughing, "more especially as I never saw you before; but you're welcome to run your horse and beat me if you can."

"Rory'll beat more than'll beat him, I'll go bail. I'd take four to one he beats My Mary for one."

"So you shall; what do you want it to?"

"'Deed I can't afford much. Wait while I see, your honour," and thrusting his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat, Mr. Cassidy produced a large greasy pocket-book, from which he extracted a sheaf of dirty one-pound notes.

"I'll trouble you for five pound for your entrance," observed the steward.

"Och, murther," ejaculated the red-haired owner of Rory, "I thought it was only three."

"You needn't enter unless you like," said the official.

"And you needn't bet unless you like," chimed in Westropp.

The man drew himself up as he rejoined proudly, "Tim Cassidy never went back of his word; there's five pounds for my horse, sir, and there's five more I stake against Misther Westropp's twenty, av you'll kindly take care of it for me."

"All right; and now, my good fellow, you must go for the present—they are clearing the course for the next race."

"I'm off, yer honour," replied Mr. Cassidy, doffing his tall hat, and then strolling away with his horse's bridle over his arm.

The Hunt Steeplechase has nothing to do with this history, and would be, therefore, tedious to describe, but that event satisfactorily brought to an issue, the bell shortly rings for saddling for the Catch Weight race, about which the spectators are manifesting much interest. The first competitor to appear is Mr. Cassidy, upon Rory, and it at once becomes evident that he has enlisted the sympathy of the mob, with whom he keeps up a playful interchange of pleasantry as he walks his horse up the course. His costume

is certainly not in accord with that conventionally recognized. Mr. Cassidy's preparations for the contest have consisted in the discarding of the long-tailed coat, and the acquisition of an antique hunting spur, and as he now progresses leisurely past the stand, the tall hat, gaily flowered waistcoat, gaudy Barcelona neckerchief, rather baggy cord breeches, and gaiters, produce a roar of laughter from the inmates. Still they were too innately sportsmen not to also take stock of Rory. He was hardly the pony the owner made him out, although, no doubt, he was a trifle under fifteen hands, a rough, wiry, unkempt animal, with a knowing head, and unmistakable signs of breeding about him, but he certainly did not look in the least prepared for racing purposes.

"You're not going to allow that fellow to start?" ejaculated Anson, who, with a light over-coat enshrouding his dandy orange jacket, had just lounged in to hear the last gossip about the race before mounting Molly Bawn.

"We've no choice; the man claims his right to enter, and there's no gainsaying it."

"But he's not properly dressed; look at his get up," said the soldier, with unmitigated disgust. "It's guying the whole affair."

"What can we do? fine him for not riding in colours, no doubt, but nothing else. He's paid his entrance, and he has a right to start."

Captain Anson descended the rough steps of the stand, feeling much annoyed. He had a horror of being laughed at, and could not resist a presentiment that this wild horseman was likely to stamp the race with ridicule. "There's one comfort," he muttered to himself, "if he doesn't turn the start into buffoonery, we're not likely to see much more of him," and with that consoling reflection he threw off his over-coat and swung himself into the saddle.

As he walked his mare down to the post he was joined by the horse-dealer, who sported an emerald green jacket, and was otherwise attired in most orthodox style.

"Bedad, captain, you've got me about Mr. McDonnell bating you; divil a sight of him I've had the day; an' who the blazes is this Cassidy, an' what's he mane by starting such a garron as that? Not but what the little horse has some good points about him, but then he looks as if he was just out of a 'kyar.' Cassidy! Sure I know all the country-side well, and never heard tell of a Tim Cassidy yet."

"D——d nonsense the stewards allowing him to start," growled Anson, in reply. "Suppose you still expect to beat me?"

"I'll be upsides with you at the finish, av we can only get rid of Misther Westropp."

There were nine horses clustered round the starter, but the interest of the spectators was confined to four. Two of the others were supposed by those immediately connected with them to have an off-chance, while the other three were mainly started because their owners desired the fun and devilment of a gallop over Ballycorèe. The gentlemen of the Hunt wavered in their favouritism between Mr.

Westropp's My Mary and the Captain's Molly Bawn; but an astute division of the Ennis people and many of the farmers stuck staunchly to Miles Donovan and Red Robin, while the peasantry, "the bhoys," evidently sympathized with Mr. Cassidy, although perhaps not supporting their opinion with money. The latter is a sight beautiful to gaze upon at the post, as with his clumsy brogues thrust well home in the stirrups, and sitting rather back in the saddle, with his hat jammed well back on his head, he takes the meek Rory firmly by the head, and grips tightly the ash plant that he carries in lieu of a cutting whip. To Anson's intense relief, he behaves quite quietly at the post, although when the flag falls he indulges in a frantic hurroo. They come down all together to the first wall, and Miles Donovan, who has pulled his horse a little back to keep clear of the rush, notes that Rory, encouraged by a wild yell from his master, tops the jump like a cat. Before the next fence, Miles has taken Red Robin to the front, and is forcing the running. He knows

his horse to be thoroughly fit, and not to be stopped by anything on Ballycorèe, while he believes both Molly Bawn and My Mary to be faster than his own horse. His sole chance, therefore, he argues, is to gallop them to a standstill, or by making the pace good to flurry them at their leaps, and so bring them to grief. At the end of the first mile he looks over his shoulder and discovers that though from casualty and speed he has disposed of the tail half of his field, yet that the orange jacket of Anson and the sky-blue of Mr. Westropp are still close in his wake, while he has a hazy notion of a tall hat and shirt-sleeves scurrying along not many lengths behind them. In the stewards' stand they opine that the race is confined to the leading three, but confess, with infinite astonishment, that Mr. Cassidy and Rory are not quite out of it.

About half-a-mile from home two curious changes occur. My Mary, whether a little blown or whether she slipped up, or whether she made a mistake, like other animals, human

or equine, because she could not help it, pitched on to her head and knees over a wall, and sent her master to grass as effectually as insanity did Nebuchadnezzar. Secondly, Red Robin began to falter in his stride, a fact immediately recognized by his judicious rider, who at once pulled his horse back, with the uncomfortable conviction that he had finished his own nag while endeavouring to perform that operation on his opponents. This left Anson to come along with the lead, which the captain did steadily and judiciously, and at the stewards' stand the cry arose Molly Bawn wins easily. The first man who awoke to there being a possible doubt on that point was the horse-dealer; and Miles's astonishment was considerable when, with a wild hurroo at the next jump, Mr. Cassidy passed him and took second place. Sailing along with the lead, and fancying he had the race in hand, it was not till he was over the last fence that Anson became conscious that Mr. Cassidy and his shirt-sleeves were within a couple of lengths of him. Still, surprised as he was

at the running of that unkempt pony, he looked upon it that his mare must easily outstride him in the gallop home. Another fifty yards and he found himself "caught." He shook up Molly Bawn, but to his dismay the ragged pony stuck to him like a burr. There was no time to be lost, they were getting very near the winning-post now. The captain sat down and rode his mare hard; but, to the utter bewilderment of both himself and the denizens of the stewards' stand, Mr. Cassidy, accepting the challenge, sat down also, and finishing in the most artistic fashion, finally squeezed Rory in the winner by a good neck.

Two or three minutes and Mr. Cassidy once more appeared in front of the stand to be hailed as the victor, and have handed over to him the stakes, amounting to ninety-five guineas (there were fifty added to the race by the Hunt).

"We have much pleasure in handing you over the purse, Mr. Cassidy, although we must honestly say we had no idea your entry was anything but a joke."

"I telled ye, gontlemen, that Rory was a deal betther than he looked; and now, maybe ye'd do me the honour to dine with me to-day;" and then, with another wild hurroo, Tim Cassidy hurled the tall beaver into the air, sent the red jasey after it, snatched a wet sponge from a groom who accompanied him, passed it two or three times rapidly over his features, and revealed to the astounded denizens of the stand the laughing face of Tom McDonnell.

They were a very merry party that night at Rathkeale, and Anson, Dr. Finnigan, &c., learnt from their host the history of Rory, the hero of the day. McDonnell bought him as a cast-off from one of the Curragh establishments, thinking that he would make a hack for his wife. The colt was own brother to Russborough, but from his want of size deemed useless for racing purposes, as indeed he probably was, but Mrs. McDonnell very soon found that though not fast enough for the turf he was very quick amongst hunters. He also showed an aptitude for jumping, and under

his mistress's tuition became quick as a squirrel over the stone walls of Clare. Mrs. McDonnell always had two or three horses for her own use, and these, standing in a detached stable, luckily escaped the influenza which laid low her husband's. Rory was in fair condition, a few canters and a gallop or two made him tolerably fit for his task, while grooming his coat persistently the wrong way gave him the ragged disreputable appearance he presented at Ballycorèe. The masquerading business was all Mrs. McDonnell's idea, and her husband entered eagerly into the joke: how well the disguise was sustained we already know. But although there was much laughter at Rathkeale over the event of the day, it is doubtful whether there was not more still in Carmody's coffee-room. Miles Donovan was especially tickled with McDonnell's impersonation and the unexpected winning of his two wagers, and never tired in after years of relating the story of the "Ride over Ballycorèe."

AN AMERICAN TANTALUS.

SOME forty years ago I imagine most boys, more especially those who were aspirants for a commission, as well as men of more mature years, but unlearned in military life, derived their ideas as to what it was like chiefly from the novels of Charles Lever. 'Charles O'Malley' and 'Harry Lorrequer' were to many, doubtless, as they were to the writer, vivid pictures of how time passed with officers in garrison country quarters. We believed in the balls, flirtations, theatricals, those nights at mess, those rollicking suppers, the songs, good stories, the adventures—we believed them all to be continually going on, just as the brilliant novelist had described them. Such of us as were destined for the army

panted for the time when we also should join in the fun; when it would be our privilege to come across the Maurice Quins, Monsoons, and Fred Powers of the profession; for that the counterparts of these characters were still in existence we believed as firmly as in the very existence of the army itself. Our pulses tingled at the stories of Albuera and of Badajos, and the idea of tearing up to Apsley House as a bearer of despatches containing the news of another "Vittoria" made one's brain positively reel.

Now, it must be borne in mind that if this picture was somewhat over-coloured, it was not altogether untrue. During the twenty years that succeeded Waterloo the habit of deep drinking, though very slowly dying out, still, perhaps, pretty well held its own. That such a seductive vice should linger longer in some strongholds was only in the order of things. As may be naturally supposed the army, always high professors of the art, were amongst the last to discontinue it; and even down to the days immediately preceding the

Crimean war, such orgies as those limned by Lever were of pretty frequent occurrence. Perhaps neither the songs nor the stories were quite so good, but singing there was, and story-telling, too; albeit both songs and stories did duty o'er and o'er again.

Cantoned about the country for five-and-thirty years of peace, save for a few changes in the drill-book, a good many variations of uniform, and a very strong modification of the Penal Code, the British army, I take it, differed but little from their predecessors of the Peninsula. Then came two things—a cry for military education, and also the arm of precision; shaped at first in the form of a Minie rifle, and that old English army of the first half of this century disappeared as completely as hundreds of other time-honoured institutions. I should just like to have seen the subaltern who, in the days when I served my novitiate, would have ventured to tell old Dick G., a Tipperary man and captain of our Grenadier company, as he ordered his sixth tumbler, that he contemplated introducing a

piano into the ante-room. I verily believe the veteran would have had a fit upon the hearthrug. Nor, again, in these days, would that commanding officer find favour in the eyes of the authorities, whose devoted followers used to take it in terms to sit up with him. How we laughed when the story went round the service, as such stories always do, of how this duty devolved one night upon a weakly-constitutioned subaltern. He was late for parade the next morning, and sought to mitigate the wrath of his chief by pleading the late hour at which they had retired the night before. Looking contemptuously at the delinquent, the Colonel drew himself up, and in icy tones retorted, "Mr. B., officers who cannot keep my hours had better leave my regiment."

All this exordium has been necessary for rightly understanding the story which I am about to narrate.

Seth Hagar was a well-to-do New York merchant—a prosperous bachelor, with a very comfortable house and appointments to match.

A steady respectable citizen, mixing in good society, popular everywhere; a shrewd, sharp man of business, but who took his work, as he did his pleasure, with moderation. He had not that feverish anxiety to make a "pile" so characteristic of the American. He had money—and to spare—for all he wanted, and though, like a sensible man in the prime of life, he preferred to continue a prosperous business to doing nothing, yet he had no idea of making himself the least a slave to it. He had never taken a wife for reasons best known to himself, or he most assuredly would have had little difficulty in persuading a lady to take the head of his table. Now Seth Hagar had acquired the reputation of being a very studious man—"wonderfully well-informed man, sir," his friends were wont to tell you. So he was—a shrewd, sensible man; he was generally up in the ordinary topics of the day. "Devilish well-read man, sir, is Hagar," was another thing his friends constantly said about him—and this was not exactly the case. He had achieved this reputation after the for-

tuitous way that people do at times make reputations. Not having that restless temperament with which the majority of his fellow-countrymen are afflicted, if he did not happen to have any engagement for the evening he did not conceive it imperative on him "to go somewhere." He often made answer when asked what he had been doing the preceding evening, that he had passed it at home over a cigar and a book, and on these grounds he had obtained the reputation of being a well-read man. Seth Hagar was an inveterate novel reader; the American publishers (bless their disinterested hearts!) are indefatigable in placing an early and constant supply of English fiction at the disposal of their customers, and that Lever should be a very great favourite with Mr. Hagar, was only what might be expected. He had often thought what fun a night at an English mess must be, and though there could be no such luck as to hear a Major Monsoon tell the story of the "Queen of Spain's sherry," still, those English were always fighting in India, or somewhere

or other, and there must always be plenty of queer stories running round a mess-table. Seth Hagar, indeed, like most Americans at that time—(I am speaking of the days immediately preceding the great Civil War)—hardly ever saw a battalion of soldiers on parade. The small army of the United States was usually scattered up and down the Indian frontier, and even in New York, except upon such gala occasions as the 4th of July, the sight of a battalion of regulars was almost an event, so that Mr. Hagar had little chance of ever looking on at military display.

Now it so happened that Seth Hagar had a very intimate friend in a large way of business at Quebec. This gentleman constantly came up to New York on business for a week or so, and invariably dined two or three times with Hagar, and over and over again had urged Seth to pay him a visit in return. "I can make it pleasant for you," he would say, "either in summer or winter; but we have always most fun going on in the winter. We are all too busy, for one thing, in the summer, and the

old city, like New York here, gets too hot to be pleasant. In our long winters, what with curling, sleighing, and skating, dancing, flirting, whist, theatricals, and an occasional sing-song, you will not find time hang heavily on your hands I'll engage. You have plenty of pretty girls in New York, but you can't beat the Canadians in general, and Quebec in particular. Come and see, sir—come and see." And the last time Mr. Carlingford pressed the question, Seth gave a positive promise to come and spend a week in Quebec in the ensuing winter.

With the first snow Seth Hagar took the cars, and in due course arrived at Point Levi, where he was met by his friend Carlingford. There was already plenty of ice in the St. Lawrence, although not as yet enough to stop the steam-ferry, upon which they therefore crossed the river to Quebec. The quaint old city had just put on her snow-white robes, appropriate wedding-garment for her marriage with winter, and all Quebec was just entering upon that gay season with all the zest for its

recreations that always possesses the inhabitants at its commencement. As it goes on, those six months of frost and snow become somewhat wearisome. The fun is rather out of the sleighing when the roads become studded with *cahots*—holes worn in the snow that jerk the inmates nearly out of their sleighs as they bump in and out of them. People still skate perseveringly, but it is more for exercise than for pure enjoyment. Tobogganing and snow-shoeing are apt to pall after a few weeks; but Quebec never tires of dancing nor, like other places, of flirtation; while as for the curlers, whoever heard of one of those enthusiasts—you were either no curler or an enthusiast—who could have enough of the "roaring game." Seth Hagar was much struck with the queer old city as they climbed "the Mountain"—the steep street leading from the lower town to the upper; the high, narrow-gabled houses, the tortuous narrow streets so utterly unlike the prim rectangular cities of America, interested him much; especially was he taken with the big market-place as they

swept past the Jesuit Barracks and the gay strains of a military band broke upon his ear. On through St. Louis Gate, round one corner after another under the grassy battlements of the grim old citadel, they sped along the St. Louis road until Mr. Carlingford pointed with his whip to the famous "Plains of Abraham."

"Pull up," exclaimed Seth, "stop the sleigh a minute. I must have a good stare at this. And that is the place," he continued, pointing to the snow-covered expanse, "upon which you Britishers licked the French clean off the American Continent for good and all?"

"That's it," said Carlingford; "but never mind looking at it now. I will bring you out here another day and take you all round. Meantime, I am confoundedly hungry, and feel more for luncheon than anything else."

Mr. Hagar soon settled down under his friend's roof—a comfortable Canadian châlet some couple of miles beyond "the Plains." In fact, he very speedily admitted that he was having a very good time indeed. It was all

fresh to him, and it was impossible to find better introducers to all the fun and frolic of "the ancient city" than his host and hostess. He was taken a turn with the Tandem Club. He was taken to dances. He was taken to the rink on a band day, where the ring of scores of skates responded to the inspiriting strains of the ante-room valses. He was taken to see a battalion manœuvre in snow shoes, a piece of military swagger that came off on the Esplanade, and was got up principally for the amusement of Quebec society. Mr. Hagar was certainly much astonished at how cleverly the men moved in their strange *chaussures*. He had made the acquaintance of numberless people, for his entertainers knew everybody in Quebec, and amongst others of several of the officers. Here was an element to which he was as yet a perfect stranger, to wit, the military. If you skated, it was to a military band. If you danced, it was probably also to a military band. The streets were full of soldiers. He never turned a corner without expecting to find himself in the presence of a guard of some

sort. Officers in their grey, smartly-braided and fur-trimmed over-coats, long boots and black Astrakan forage caps, were continually passing through the upper town on their way from one barrack to another.

"Well, Carlingford," he said, as he sat smoking a cigar with his host after a little bachelor dinner at the Stadacona Club, "I must say you have put me through handsomely —injudiciously, perhaps—because, you see, when a man has such a real good time in a place as I have had here he is apt, what we call, to hanker after repeating the experiment."

"Well, all I can say is," replied his host with a jolly laugh, "if you feel that sort of hankering and don't indulge it, have it out with yourself and don't come complaining to me. You know you are as welcome here as the sight of the grass in May-time, and you must have looked at snow for six months at a time to thoroughly appreciate what that is."

"Thank you, thank you! and I know you

mean it. But there is one thing I would like to do before I go back—I never have done it, and of course I don't want to ask you to do anything that is disagreeable, but I fancy you could perhaps manage it for me."

"What is it?" inquired Carlingford briefly.

"Well, I should so like to dine at a military mess. Could you manage it, do you think?"

"Manage it!" replied the other, "nothing easier; why, those Rifle fellows we lunched with the other day would have given us a dinner, I have no doubt, if they had half a hint that we should like it; but as for the —th in the Louis Barracks, they have been here so long that we call them in fun sometimes 'the Quebec Guards.' I know several of them so intimately as to feel no hesitation in asking them for a dinner. I will arrange about it when I drive in to business to-morrow."

The next morning Mr. Carlingford pulled up his sleigh in Louis Street, found his friend, and had only to say what he wanted to be assured it would be done.

"Let us see, this is Tuesday," said Captain Wrax; "he won't mind short notice as he is leaving at the end of the week, so we will say Thursday. It is band night and that makes more of a splash, you know; other fellows will have guests, and I dare say a few more of us will be able to pick up a man or two to meet him."

"All right, then; on Thursday at half-past seven we will be with you. I don't exactly know what Hagar expects to see, but I know he will get a good dinner, and if he don't pass a pleasant evening it will be his own fault."

Seth Hagar was delighted when he heard of the success of his host's negotiation, and at once made up his mind that there was one thing it behoved him to do, and that was to be extremely guarded with the wine-cup in the early part of the evening. It was not that he had high moral views on the subject and held that the taking too much was a gross degradation and hideous enormity, but to use his own expression he wanted to see the "show through." He had pretty fair confidence in

his own powers of drinking, as, when you are conversant with slings, have graduated in cocktails, and are by no means appalled at the sight of a brandy-smash, a man has a right to be; but what he dreaded was premature intoxication. He resolved that there must be no hurrying of the andante—that he would do his drinking meekly and gradually, so as to thoroughly enjoy all the humours of the scene. He recollected from Lever that "the soldiers" never considered the rights of hospitality properly fulfilled unless they sent their guests away with

——"just a drappie in their e'e;"

but that they were still more delighted when they carried them to their vehicles and despatched them to their homes in a state of blissful unconsciousness.

Thursday evening came, and just as the drums and fifes were rattling off the "Roast Beef of Old England," Mr. Carlingford's sleigh pulled up at the door of the mess-house. Some six or eight officers, including Captain

Wrax and four or five gentlemen, whose ordinary evening costume marked them as guests, were lounging in the ante-room, as they entered. They all came forward to cordially greet Carlingford, and most of them shook hands with Mr. Hagar also, having already made his acquaintance. Dinner was announced, and they trooped up-stairs to the mess-room, other officers dropped rapidly in, and in a few minutes Mr. Hagar found himself one of a dinner party of upwards of a score of men. The American was delighted with the aspect of affairs, and the *coup d'œil* of an English mess-table is rather imposing when seen for the first time. That of the —th was much the same as that of any other corps. Three large candelabras lit the table, decorated in the centre by a considerable display of regimental plate. Mr. Hagar was charmed; he admired the gay jackets; he admired the plate, and inquired the story of some of the silver cups that were scattered about, a little disappointed at the history of these last—as they were principally goblets presented by

officers on marriage, or on leaving the regiment. So far, the conversation, though pleasant enough, could not be characterized as brilliant. None of those racy stories had as yet caught Mr. Hagar's ear. But it was early yet, and then again he had not quite so far made out the Major Monsoon of the party; though he strongly suspected an elderly florid-complexioned man seated at the far end of the table opposite of being him. In the mean time, Mr. Hagar stuck strictly to claret and drank sparingly of that. More than one officer asked him to take wine. He bowed, but only just touched the glass with his lips. His abstemiousness at last attracted the attention of Captain Wrax, who inquired anxiously whether he was sure he liked that wine. Would he not prefer champagne, or perhaps he would prefer a better, an after-dinner claret, now. No, Mr. Hagar replied, the wine was very nice, and inwardly congratulated himself on his foresight and prudence. He, however, emptied his glass as evidence that he had no fault to find with the wine.

The cloth is drawn. The decanters placed upon the table, as well as the regimental snuff-box, about which his left hand neighbour immediately narrates to him a marvellous legend (there always is a marvellous legend about a regimental snuff-box) to which Mr. Hagar listens reverentially. The president gives "The Queen," as he passes the decanters, to which the vice loyally responds "God bless her." Another two or three minutes, and the band ring out a lively set of valses, and the claret-jugs pass merrily from both ends of the table. Still, the American sips his wine with caution. He is all ears, but as yet he has heard no such rollicking story as that of the "Queen of Spain's Sherry." He is a little uneasy, too, as to who really represents Major Monsoon. The florid-faced officer is not, apparently, keeping that end of the table in a roar. However, the band comes to a conclusion as the decanters somewhat languidly circulate for the fourth or fifth time. "Ah," thinks Mr. Hagar, "now the music is over no doubt the conversation will get general and more

racy." He wishes he could make out the Major Monsoon—perhaps that rubicund, bald-headed officer at the top may be him. He asks Captain Wrax who it is, and is informed it is the regimental doctor. Ah, come, he thinks, he has found the counterpart of the famous Maurice Quin. Suddenly his breath is almost taken away by the sight of a waiter coming round with a large silver salver. "Snakes and scorpions!" he mutters to himself, "if this is not extraordinary! Why, here is coffee!" The president passes the sherry with the observation, "Any one for a white-wash," and as he does so, men begin to rise and saunter out of the room. Ah! thinks Seth, they are holding themselves in reserve no doubt for supper; I reckon one must keep one's eyes skinned when dining with the British soldier. He accompanies his host to the ante-room, where he is immediately furnished with a cigar, and asked if he will play a rubber.

He assents, lights his cigar, and sits down. He looks round the room at the end of the

first game. He cannot make it out. There is another whist-table going, at which his ideal Dr. Quin is playing with the solemnity of an undertaker. Six or eight men are chatting and smoking round the fire. Ah! this looks better, the bell is rung, a waiter receives several orders, and speedily returns with brandies and soda. Mr. Hagar feels sanguine again—the evening is evidently at last about to commence. Captain Wrax, who forms one of the quartette, suddenly calls the waiter.

"Now, Carlingford," exclaims the Captain, "What are you going to have? you will have a soda and brandy, I presume, and you also, Mr. Hagar?"

"Certainly," replied Carlingford; "sitting behind such paper as I had that last rubber, always makes me confoundedly thirsty—hang it, sir, only four trumps in three hands."

"Nothing for me, thank you," replied Mr. Hagar; "I will have another cigar, but I never care to liquor when I am playing whist."

Mr. Carlingford stared at his friend for a moment in mute surprise, and then ejaculated, "Well! I am dashed; why, I have seen you clean us all out at the New York Club, and astonish two or three 'slings' while you were doing it."

"Have a gin-sling," interposed Captain Wrax. "I assure you our mess waiter can make them very fairly."

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Hagar, "I'll wait." I have got to see this thing through, he thought, and I will, as sure as my name is Seth Hagar. If these Britishers think I won't take the muzzle off at supper all I say is, they are mistaken. Time slips on. Mr. Hagar again glances round the room. There is a good deal of quiet chaffing and laughing round the fireplace, but none of that wild boisterous revelry for which Mr. Hagar's soul pants. He glances across at Mr. Carlingford, who, just having had a second goblet of some seductive fluid placed at his elbow, is proceeding scientifically to make the most of six trumps. The other whist-table is still going

quietly on, and the sole fragment of conversation, humorous or otherwise, that he has heard from the pseudo Dr. Quin's lips has been an offer of long odds in crowns. Mr. Hagar betakes himself once more to his whist; but his mind is becoming troubled, he is filled with misgivings. To his practised eye the party don't look like grilled bones or anchovy toasts. "Very pleasant, very gentlemanly," he mutters to himself; "but I'll be hung if I think they are on the all-fired splurge this evening;" and here a slight chuckle from Carlingford, playing against him, as Seth trumped his partner's best spade, admonished Mr. Hagar to attend to his game. The clock on the mantelpiece chimed twelve. They surely will begin to think about those grilled bones now, he thought. Two or three of the men at the fireplace finish their tumblers, throw the stumps of their cigars into the fire, nod to the whist-players, and lounge out of the room.

"You rather laid over us that time," said Wrax, as the rubber terminated.

"Well, not very much," replied Carlingford, "but your partner did us an uncommon good turn when he knocked your spade out: that is what made our hands."

"Too true, Captain! too true!" exclaimed Seth Hagar. "I own my fault; I got wool-gathering—thinking of something else."

"Of course you did," replied Carlingford, laughing. "If you let your system run down, and perseveringly refuse to take nourishment, how can you expect to play whist?"

"Lots of time for another 'parte,' any way," exclaimed Wrax, who was much too courteous to dwell upon his partner's offending.

"All right, sir, drive on; I'm game," replied Carlingford.

Seth Hagar was more than ever bewildered. This highly-convivial supper, with its songs, stories, revelry, and fun, seemed becoming more visionary, more a dream of his own imagination, every moment. He cut the cards mechanically, and wondered whether Her Majesty's —th were a pattern corps—were they, like the good boy in a charity

school, quoted, and hurled at the heads of their more peccant comrades as a pattern of sobriety, gentlemanly conduct, and good manners? were all other regiments like this? and was all Lever wrote but most imaginative description? He was aroused in his abstraction by a sharp "You to lead, Hagar," from Mr. Carlingford. This next "parte" was, as it so happened, a rather protracted one. It ended at last, after a hard fight, in favour of Carlingford and Hagar, who were now partners.

"Game! that makes both rubbers, and finishes the 'game,'" exclaimed Carlingford. "Eleven points; the half-crowns on the rubber, and the odds in half-crowns, comes to two pound three-and-six. Two-three-six I have got to take from you, Captain. Twenty minutes past one! By Jove! it is time we were off, Hagar. You must allow me to ring for my sleigh, Wrax."

Seth Hagar glances round the room. Two red-jackets and one black coat are still smoking round the fireplace. The other whist-table,

which is still going, like their own has been composed of two guests and a couple of soldiers. It is evident to the American now that supper will not even be alluded to. Captain Wrax suggests the propriety of their having something just to keep out the cold on their way home.

"Not another drop, thank you," replied Carlingford; "I have had a skinfull. I'll just light a cigar and be off. As for Hagar, here, I don't know what has come to him—whether he is in love, or his liver is out of order, I can't say, but he seems to have 'swore off,' any way. What, the sleigh at the door, eh! Weston?" he continued, as the mess-waiter entered the room. "Thank you. Good night; don't come out; our coats are in the passage—we shall do very well without you. Good night, gentlemen." And so saying Carlingford bustled into the passage, and Mr. Hagar had nothing for it but to follow him. He got into the sleigh, wrapped himself carefully up, and took refuge in his own thoughts. In vain did Carlingford ask, on their home-

ward drive, what he thought of a regimental mess—had not they had a pleasant evening? —Was it what he had expected? He could extract nothing but grunts in reply. At last, Mr. Carlingford coming to the conclusion that his friend was unwell, ceased to question him; but when they reached home he exclaimed—

"Look here, Hagar, it seems to me that you are not yourself. You are unwell; something has disagreed with you. Before we turn in, is there anything I can get you? Anything you want?"

"Want?" replied Mr. Hagar, "I rather reckon there is. For God's sake get me a stiff glass of brandy and water, and I will tell you all about it."

And when Mr. Carlingford heard what the American had expected, and the cause of his self-enforced abstinence, he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Ah!" observed Mr. Hagar, as he sipped his brandy and water, and grimly watched his host's undisguised merriment, "It is all very well for you; as you pleasantly observed at

the barracks there, you have got your skinfull; but as for me, all I have got to say is, it is well Ananias lived a good while ago. He wouldn't be in it with these confounded novelists."

THE RIVAL ROSES.

One of those glorious October mornings with a sharp crackle of frost in it, and the sun steadily battling his way through the mist. Such a shooting day,—a day upon which you know that though the birds will be a bit wild to start with, they will lie like stones in the afternoon, albeit the turnips will be heavy walking. Robert Madison, smoking a pipe in the gravel ring fronting Boundstone Grange, contemplates the day's prospects with languid satisfaction; languid, that is, for him, Madison being a keen sportsman, and wont to be moved to much exhilaration at the prospect of dealing out dire destruction to fur and feathers. But upon this occasion he is apparently thinking of other things than the busi-

ness immediately in hand, and glances now and then at the rose in his buttonhole in a manner that would have set a shrewd female observer wondering: a very pretty white rose, slightly faded, but with no apparent peculiarity as a botanical specimen, nor even if it had was Robert Madison the man to be moved thereby.

A shrewd practical stalwart man of five and thirty, taking his pleasure, as he did his work, with a will; and whether with pen in hand at the bank, handling his breechloader in the turnips, his racket at lawn tennis, or whirling round a ball-room to Strauss' last valse, throwing himself heart and soul into what he was doing,—secret of most success in this world. However, Robert Madison may well look somewhat serious this morning. He knows that he went extreme lengths with Mary Dart at the Buffington ball last night; lengths that might well justify her in expecting to be asked to be his wife, and he thinks he might look for a favourable answer.

Miss Mary Dart is a very handsome girl,

staying just now at Boundstone, and Robert Madison is thinking over the advisability of coming to the point before the break-up of the party, the next day but one, shall separate them. He is very fairly off, honestly in love, getting, he reflects, to a time when it behoves him to settle down, and he has come to the conclusion that he has met his fate, if she will accept him. Once more he glances down at the white rose, given him last night with a jesting command that he should wear her favour all the next day. It had been carefully kept in water, and a bright smile from the fair damsel when she saw it in his shooting-jacket had been his reward at breakfast. Yes, his mind is made up, either to-night or to-morrow he'll ask Mary Dart to be his wife. A man of decision, Robert Madison, and he has come to a determination with less self-argument than most men of his age would have indulged in on so momentous a subject.

"Dimsdale and his nephew are late," observed the Squire, as with two other men he emerged from the stable yard with a *posse* of

keepers and two or three retrievers at their heels; "it's getting time we were off."

"Yes," laughed Madison, "he said last night they should never be here in time. Tom had got smitten by some angel or other, and couldn't be induced to come home."

"Yes, some girl who came with the Harrington people. I never saw her myself, but heard him and another fellow or two raving about her. Dancing not much in my line, you know, Squire," observed one of his companions. "No, and as for Coleby, there, we couldn't get him to the ball at all."

"My cold was so awfully bad, nothing but negus and sweet spirits of nitre with a long night's rest pulled me together at all."

He had smoked like a limekiln and read a French novel till two; but Mr. Coleby abhorred country balls, and was invariably afflicted with a terrible cold when such questionable amusement was afloat.

A grinding of wheels over the gravel, and a four-wheeled dog-cart, containing the Dimsdales, makes its appearance. Young Tom

jumps out at once, while his uncle descends in far more deliberate fashion. A good shot and rare sportsman is James Dimsdale, but not to be hurried by any mortal in this world,—a man who conducts his pleasure, his business, or his sport in cool methodical fashion, and can by no manner of means be put out of the even tenour of his way. As for Tom, he is a great ally of Madison's, albeit there are a good six or seven years between them: the younger man takes after the senior in the matter of "go" in character; but in one respect they differ,—Tom Dimsdale is desperately given to flirtation, invariably making love to every pretty girl he comes across to the extent of his opportunities, while Madison possesses a more contained and less volatile disposition on this point.

Tom throws off his ulster and appears in workmanlike shooting jacket and knickerbockers, although there is a decided touch of dandyism about the whole get-up. Madison, looking him over critically, notices also that he wears a red rose in his buttonhole: it is

the facsimile of his own, but in a different colour.

"We're late, Squire, I know; said we should be last night. No getting Tom away from that Buffington ball. That's the way with these young ones; they're as bad as young hounds among hares when they get among muslin. Fit to shoot? Not he. Couldn't smoke on his way to cover and's got a rose in his buttonhole instead of a dog-whistle."

"Come, come, uncle, this is arrant libel. You've no business to decide I'm not in form till I've been tried and found wanting. Did you never hear of that cavalry regiment at York, who never hunted on Mondays because they couldn't get their buttonhole bouquets down from Harding's on that morning? They said up there they could ride all the same, and took a lot of beating, in spite of their swagger. It's the fashion, Squire, isn't it? Why, look, uncle! Madison here is similarly decorated."

"Come to similar grief, you mean," returned

Uncle James, laughing. "Sorry for you, Madison, sorry for you. I know what comes of this sort of thing. You'll be both mooning along thinking of that after-supper valse or the quadrille you sat out on the stairs; what a jolly girl she is; and what's the lowest price matrimony can be done at. Covey rises at your toes; you both more frightened than the birds; two barrels apiece discharged at random into the infinite; sole results, a second discharge of uncalled-for expletives from your graceless lips. That's about it, Squire, eh? Bless you, boys! it's happened to us. We've done it before you. No, I don't like to see flowers in the buttonholes the morning after a ball. To make men shoot straight, they ought to have been thrown over two or three times the night before, and turn out, regarding women like gun-cotton cartridges, as deceitful and unreliable. They attend strictly to business then, and throw a bit of vice into their shooting besides."

A roar of laughter greeted the termination of James Dimsdale's exordium; but it was

with just a tinge of petulance that his nephew rejoined,—

"Well, Squire, if you and my uncle take the centre, leave the left to the other gentlemen, and the right to Madison and me, we 'll see who does most damage by lunch-time."

It was thus settled, and the party having passed out of the front gate, and traversed a couple of hundred yards or so down the road, turned into a good-sized turnip-field, and the sport began. There was a fair amount of shooting in this field, and, as it chanced, the bigger share fell to the right of the line, and Uncle Dimsdale's predictions were far from realized, for both Madison and Tom shot straight enough, and rendered an excellent account of what got up before them.

"It's odds on 'the roses,' Uncle Jim," cried Tom Dimsdale as they finished the field.

"Not a bit," chuckled the old gentleman; "wait till the shooting gets a trifle slower, and you and Madison begin sauntering and dreaming over a stubble—perhaps babble about your two roses—we shall see then."

And they were destined to see very shortly, for the field they now entered was forty acres of stubble, and this had to be crossed before the next cover was arrived at. There were no pretensions of shooting it on the part of the guns, who made their way in most desultory fashion. The beaters kept a wide straggling line under the directions of the head keeper, so as to lift any birds there might be on it into the cover in front. Madison and Tom strolled across it together.

"Who was your divinity last night?" inquired the former, "who is the fair enslaver about whom your uncle is so inclined to be facetious?"

"Disagreeably so," returned the other; "but he will have his joke, and he was deuced good about staying last night; he waited for me at least an hour and a half after he—to put it mildly—had had quite enough of it."

"Yes, man; but who was she? who decked you with that bonnie red rose?"

"The prettiest and jolliest girl in the room, Bob. She gave it me, and challenged me to

wear her favour all to-day, saying, as she said good night, 'I may not see you, but I shall hear if my rose decks your coat to-morrow, never fear, sir.'"

"She said that to you?" returned Madison in a low tone: "it's odd!—deuced odd! She came with the Harrington people, did she not?"

"I fancy so, but am not sure."

"What was she like? dark or fair? majestic or *petite?*"

"A tall dark girl, with bright laughing eyes, dressed in white, with green trimmings."

"What an extraordinary coincidence!—what was her name?"

"Miss Dart."

"You mean to say Mary Dart gave you that rose?"

"Most undoubtedly; she wrote her name on my card herself, D-a-r-t, Dart."

"The infernal—!" But whatever Robert Madison had intended to say was lost in a whirring of wings, and cries of "mark" from two embryo beaters of fifteen or thereabouts.

They had blundered right into a covey of skulking partridges; the four barrels rang rapidly out, and, as the birds winged their way scathless to the turnips, a jolly guffaw was heard from the left.

Ha! ha!" roared James Dimsdale. "Roses won't last so late in the year!"

The two delinquents grinned grimly,—a ghastly performance our adverse fate sometimes compels us to. I am afraid some of those expletives Uncle James had suggested also escaped their lips; but they exchanged no further words until they were getting over the fence into the next turnip-field, when Madison said abruptly,

"You are quite sure about the name, Tom?"

"Yes; but why?"

"Never mind; I'll tell you later. Quite sure, too, she said that about 'wearing her favour all to-day'?"

"Certain, sure. Girls don't often make one such a quaint speech when they give us a flower."

Then they separated, and took their respective places in the line. As for Madison, his shooting became simply disgraceful. It was evident to Tom Dimsdale that his mind was preoccupied—that he had no thought for what he was about. If you be thinking of your debts, what an awful book you have for the Cæsarewitch, or of your investments in Turkish loans, you are apt to shoot wild; and despite Uncle Jim's relentless chaff, and Tom's adjurations "to pull himself together," Robert went steadily off his shooting. In short, when they pulled up for lunch, despite having been rather favoured in the matter of birds, and although young Dimsdale had done his devoir like a man, "the roses" were decidedly behindhand in the matter of scoring, and their seniors proportionately jubilant.

How sick and savage Robert Madison felt at all the chaff he was called upon to endure! Yes, they were laughing over those "roses," but it was no laughing matter to him. When a man well turned of thirty becomes in earnest about a woman, he is wont to be very earnest

indeed. And now to find that this woman he had deemed willing to listen to his love was a mere coquette; that she even accorded an exactly similar favour, accompanied by an exactly similar behest, to his light-hearted friend—it was maddening! And he had made up his mind to ask this girl to be his wife on the earliest opportunity! But she was like all the rest. What a fool he had been to suppose otherwise! Well, it was all over now (and here he missed a hare, and swore inwardly). He was raging and going through all the stereotyped vituperation of the sex indulged in by those who deem themselves jilted; though, on the woman's side, it must be allowed, man's vanity at times leads him to draw unwarrantable deductions. However, the shooting terminates at last. Old Dimsdale has dropped his chaff of "the roses," for it is evident to him, as to the others, that Robert Madison is out of sorts. What is the matter they don't know; but it is not judicious to press a man in the sulks upon the subject of his indisposition.

As James Dimsdale drove his nephew home, he remarked, with a chuckle, "I was right, you see, in the main. It didn't seem to affect you; but roses in the buttonhole augur ill for a man's shooting after a county ball. Robert Madison got entangled amongst the muslin last night, depend upon it."

Tom thought so too, but he made no reply, and wondered much what it was that had so upset his chum.

"I believe this rose of mine had something to say to it," he muttered. "And now I come to think, I fancy I saw him dancing once or twice with Miss Dart. I'm not quite sure, but almost, that it was so. Still, 'what is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?' He never met her before. A ball-room flirtation can't possibly have knocked Bob Madison over in that fashion."

The Dimsdales, who came for the day's shooting only, duly departed. Mr. Madison, avoiding the afternoon tea-table, which he usually affected, moodily sought his room, from which he did not emerge till five minutes

after the dinner-bell had chimed. Most of the party were already assembled, and amongst them Mary Dart, armed from head to heel for conquest.

This young lady noted, quick as thought, and without ever turning her eyes his way, Mr. Madison's entrance; noted also that, instead of eagerly seeking her side and astutely manœuvring to take her in to dinner, he carefully avoided her; and lastly, she observed, when she found him seated opposite her at the dinner-table, that the favour she had sportively challenged him to wear for her sake for a day was no longer in his buttonhole. Miss Dart was a young lady wise in her generation, and she pondered somewhat over all these things. What did all this portend? She had deemed herself embarked in something more than a mere ball-room flirtation, and yet, she argued, we do not even kill off those very short-lived tropical plants with such startling abruptness as a rule; we usually allow them to die down. And then she felt, as her *vis-à-vis* did, a healthy glow of indigna-

tion towards everybody and everything about her, as she recognized that she had been playing in earnest, and not for sugar-plums this time.

But Miss Dart was, at all events, much more cunning of fence than her *vis-à-vis*. He was what I have heard termed simply "an unaffordable neighbour," taciturn, and almost bearish to the unfortunates next him, while she, to the further increment of his wrath, had never been, apparently, in better spirits or more full of fun and raillery. The conclusions, too, the pair came to were widely different. He savagely thought he had done with her for ever; she, on the contrary, thought it should go hard if she didn't provoke an explanation before she took up her bed-room candle.

A handsome girl like Mary Dart had not arrived at the age of three and twenty without having been engaged in more than one flirtation. She was too honest not to acknowledge to herself that her wings were scorched this time.

"We shall probably never be anything to each other now," she thought; "but my pride and curiosity are piqued, and know 'the why' I will."

As for Madison, after a common fashion of the male creature when his love passages run askew, he gulped down bumper after bumper of claret, and mused upon how much of the drawing-room afterwards he should be obliged to do before he could decently retire to the smoking-room. He followed the advice of Lover's famous classical song—

> "So my moral is plain,
> That if love gives you pain,
> Faith, there's nothing will mend it like taking to drink."

Coffee is disposed of at last, and the gentlemen troop in to join the ladies. That Mr. Madison should take a different side of the room from his false enslaver was but natural; to take refuge in sullenness and a photograph-book was absurd. If he hoped to escape an interview with Mary Dart, his sole safety would have been in making desperate love to the next prettiest woman present. She smiled

a wicked little smile as she saw him take his seat on that distant sofa. She knew intuitively what he contemplated doing.

"No," she muttered, "Mr. Madison, you are not off for that cigar till I hear what I am held guilty of.

"Would you put that down for me?" she said, holding out her tea-cup to the man to whom she was talking, with her sweetest smile. And, before he could regain her side, she had crossed the room, and was standing in front of Robert Madison.

"Endless apologies for interrupting your studies, but you know you have made me a promise, and I must hold you to it."

"Clear the decks for action," thought Robert. "To do her justice, she comes straight to the point. One is always promising something to ladies," he replied, with a rather forced smile; "to what am I pledged to Miss Dart?"

She was a good bit in earnest, remember; but she'd scarce been the clever girl she was had she been able to restrain the humour that

danced in her eyes; now did he really think she was weak enough to come to such a direct explanation as that. It was with a little nervous laugh she responded,

"You promised the names of two or three new songs, that you said would exactly suit my voice. Would you kindly write them down for me?"

"Certainly," he replied, brusquely, and turned to the writing-table.

She followed him, and stood by his side as he wrote. "Thank you so much," she said, as she took the piece of paper from his hand. "I hear you had a real good day with the partridges. Is that so?"

"I have had many pleasanter," rejoined Madison.

"Yes, no doubt; and ladies to witness your prowess after luncheon. I see my poor rose got lost in the fray."

"Not exactly," returned the victim.

"For shame, Mr. Madison! You do not mean to say you have been rude enough to discard my favour, ere the allotted time for

you to wear it was over, in my presence? No great gift, I'll allow, and yet I've known men do more to show their gratitude for a flower from a lady's hands."

"Perhaps so: she did not probably distribute such mementoes as if she were dealing a pack of cards."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Madison," exclaimed Mary Dart, drawing herself up.

"I beg your pardon, but can you not comprehend that when one meets Miss Dart's badge in every buttonhole, it rather deteriorates in value? The Frenchmen who have done anything in these days are not particularly proud of the Cross of the Legion. You see, your grocer may also be possessed of it. Your lady's glove in your helm, Miss Dart, is very flattering; but when she gets them in by a dozen pairs at a time, and every knight in the tournay is similarly decorated, we doubt somewhat whether she's worth dying for, after all."

"Mr. Madison," rejoined the girl, "I shall not affect to misunderstand you, nor," she

continued, proudly, "do I intend to talk in metaphor. You mean that, to gratify my vanity, I gave several flowers away last night, with a similar laughing condition to that which I attached to yours?"

Madison bowed assent.

"And by what right do you assert that, sir?"

"I simply shot all day with another of your victims, decorated like myself, and holding his trophy on the like conditions."

"And his name——"

"Was Tom Dimsdale."

"I don't even know him; and did he say that I, Mary Dart, gave him that rose?"

"He said Miss Dart gave it him."

"Ah! and what colour was it? White?"

"No; red."

"And did he mention where Miss Dart was staying or came from?"

"He was a little hazy on that point, but he thought Harrington."

Mary Dart broke into a low rippling laugh as she sank down upon the adjoining settee.

"I'm very glad, Miss Dart, that the distribution of your roses has afforded you so much amusement," replied Robert Madison, with a stiff bow and turning away.

"No, stop, Mr. Madison; stop, I insist. Nay, please let me right myself in your eyes," and Mary motioned with her fan that he should join her on the settee. "I cannot help laughing at my irrepressible madcap sister," she continued, "and yet she is always getting me into these sort of scrapes. There were two Misses Dart at the ball last night,—my twin sister and myself. We are very much alike, and generally dress alike, and people who do not know us well often mistake us for one another. We often, for instance, dance with each other's partners; men claim the wrong sister, and we for the fun of the thing sometimes acknowledge the claim. Bell, indeed, is most unscrupulous, and delights in appropriating one of my belongings. She is always making capital out of the likeness, and will keep as far as she can from me in a ball-room expressly to confuse people. She was dressed

exactly like me last night, only she carried a bouquet of red roses, while mine were white. In the one talk we had during the evening I foolishly told her of the engagement I held you to over your rose. It was wrong of me, very wrong of me, and yet such confidences between sisters are so common that there is some faint excuse. My laughter-loving sister, who doubtless had extracted from Mr. Dimsdale the fact that he was to shoot here the next day, immediately gave him one of her red roses on like conditions, and no doubt looked forward to some such mystification as she has succeeded in accomplishing."

"I beg your pardon; what a brute you must have thought me!"

"No. I was anxious, I own, to know how I had incurred your highness's displeasure, and now I have cleared that up I will torment you no more."

So saying, Miss Dart rose from the sofa, but a passionate whisper made her pause. A low earnest conversation of some three or four minutes, and then she resumed her seat, which

she seemed in no hurry to change during the evening.

In spite of his after-dinner resolutions, the last man to join the smoking-room was Robert Madison.

THE SPECTRE SIGNAL.*

PICTURE to yourself a comfortably-furnished smoking-room of rather larger dimensions than one usually meets with in a country house, plentifully sprinkled with armchairs and lounges, with a cosy writing-table in the window, a side-table upon which reposed the last half-score novels, French and English, and a crackling fire of coal and wood burning brilliantly this Christmas-eve. On the walls are some three or four old coaching-pictures, a couple of Ettys, a somewhat dubious Greuze, and half a dozen old prints in black and gold frames. A couple of dwarf book-cases occupy opposite angles in the apartment, well gar-

* The stories in this paper were narrated to the writer as actual experiences.

nished with English classics, with a pair of small cases of stuffed birds above them. That the smoking-room at Benton was of more than ordinary proportions was the result of accident. It had been built for a billiard-room by an architect ignorant of that first essential condition in the construction of billiard-rooms—light. Having been pronounced a decided failure in this capacity, it was turned into an afternoon-tea room for the ladies, and during the summer achieved a partial success in that *rôle;* but when the shooting-season came on, its natural gloominess, combined with the unnatural conduct of its chimney, down which the smoke came ever, but went up never—that is, 'hardly ever,' as Captain Corcoran puts it—led to its utter condemnation in that shape.

The *châtelaine* of Benton was a woman of energy and resource; the idea of an excellent room in a country house of moderate dimensions remaining unoccupied was absurd. She knit her brows, shook her head, and sat down to think one Easter recess when she happened

to have nothing better to do. What was to be done with this contumacious chamber? She sent for the ironmonger and ordered a new grate. He came, and the bricklayer also to set it. There was infinite slopping and messing about for some days: men with muddy boots lounged through the hall and over the carpets, and gave the house generally a pretty full benefit of that magnificent impostor, the British workman paid by the job. At length the grate was pronounced in its place. The British workman loafed off, to loaf over some similar piece of work in similar half-hearted fashion. Forty-eight hours were allowed for the mortar to thoroughly dry, and then a fire was lit. Anxious moment! It smoked a little. An anxious hour! It smoked worse than ever. Once more the *châtelaine* knit her brows; then a smile rippled over her face, as one who might cry Eureka! The vocation of that room was evidently to smoke. Who were they to fly in the face of Providence? It should be the smoking-room.

That night she quietly suggested this re-distribution of space to her husband—pointed out that the present smoking-room, although just the size for a ladies' tea-room, was miserably uncomfortable and inadequate to the accommodation of his friends.

"But the other smokes to that degree you cannot have a fire in it," replied her lord.

She was forced to admit that, probably on account of the newness of the grate, it certainly did smoke a little.

With the well-known selfish obtuseness of husbands, he muttered coarsely that he did not see it; that he'd be something indistinct if he smoked in a fireless room in November; and then subsided into dreamless repose.

Ere the *châtelaine* followed his example she had conceived another idea, and, with the brief ejaculation, "The first thing to-morrow I will," she too composed herself to slumber.

The morrow came, and she did. Her lord went shooting, and she—she sent for the sweeps.

They came, and she said, "Sweep me that

chimney." They did, very much to the discomfiture of a large and flourishing colony of starlings who had for some time dwelt there. The riddle was solved: smoke cannot go up a chimney with no outlet. The fire was lit, and burnt brilliantly; the smoke departed by its proper channel; and from that hour the room was dedicated to the worship of the goddess Nicotine.

Ensconced in the easy-chairs drawn round the fire upon this Christmas-eve there are four men. On the right of the mantelpiece sits the host, his dress-coat exchanged for a loose smoking-jacket of soft gray Scotch material. Next him is a Colonel of Dragoons arrayed in most correct attire of the kind from jacket to slippers. A well-known medical man, who still retains his evening costume, and a juvenile Guardsman, radiant in amethyst velvet and embroidered *pantoufles* of purple, complete the quartette.

"Do you boast a ghost, Squire?" asked the Guardsman, addressing the master of Benton. "Although the house has been built a good

deal of late years, there is some of it must be quite old enough to warrant a ghostly legend and traditional apparition."

"Yes; that part of it lying to the right I dare say was built soon after the Great Fire of London; but I regret to say, Resley, that we don't inherit a ghost. A humdrum set of ancestors mine, I fancy, who never took boldly to criminal practices. We trace back pretty nearly to the days of Charles I.; but none of the family ever got hung, drawn, quartered, or beheaded, that I can make out. If they conspired, they took care not to be conspicuous; and if they robbed or murdered, my ancestors showed great talent in the vocation, as they certainly were never found out."

"It's a queer thing," remarked the Dragoon, as he took his cigar from his lips—"only a century back, and the belief in ghosts and apparitions was universal. The story of Lady Tyrconnell, and two or three others of the same stamp, are hard to get over."

"What was Lady Tyrconnell's story? I never heard that," interrupted the Guardsman.

"Very well, then, read it; but don t expect me to narrate such a well-known ghostly legend as that."

"But still, can any of you three give a case in point of your own personal knowledge?"

"There's one well known amongst some of the survivors of the Balaklava death-ride," observed the Colonel mechanically, speaking as a man might whose imagination had suddenly conjured up a thrilling scene of bygone years, and who saw it at the moment once more vividly before his mental retina. "Yes, there's one lady I knew who always declared her son stood before her in his battle-stained uniform on the night of that 25th of October, when two-thirds of the Light Brigade lay stark and silent in the Valley of Balaklava."

"And was he one of them?" asked Resley softly.

"Yes; he was amongst the killed."

"But have you ever experienced anything of the kind yourself, Colonel?"

"Yes," replied the Dragoon shortly. He

puffed vigorously at his cigar for a few seconds, and then added, "If you fellows choose, I'll tell you all about it."

There was a chorus of assent, which the Doctor supplemented by the observation,

"Any authenticated stories of this description have a very peculiar interest for me."

"Well, my narrative is at all events short. A few years ago, when I was Major of the —th Hussars, I found myself left in command of the regiment, then quartered at Mhow. We were in the best of health, both men and horses, when we were suddenly attacked by one of those epidemical fevers so common in India. Our barracks were excellent. The medical men grappled with the disease at once, recognizing promptly how in that country such disorders spread, and everything we could think of was done to check the epidemic. It was useless; it ran through our ranks like wildfire, and the percentage in hospital was appalling; but more ghastly still was the awful fact that of those that came out of the sick-wards one-third, poor fellows, were

numbered with the dead. The hospital was a fine airy building, the cantonment a large one, and all the medical skill in it conferred with our own surgeons on the subject; all sorts of suggestions were made, carried out, and proved useless—the men persistently sickened, and sank beneath the deadly fever. As you may easily suppose, a gloom spreads over a corps at such times. With old comrades going daily to the grave, and considerable probability of following them speedily oneself, it is not likely to be otherwise, and that depression of spirits which is apt to conduce to the propagation of the epidemic becomes established.

"To counteract this as far as possible was of course my main object. Once in the hospital, and it was pretty much matter for the doctors. I was simply bound to do my utmost to prevent their going there. Work of course was good for them, and that, poor fellows, there was little trouble in providing them with. The horses naturally were unaffected by the disease; and with so many of

their comrades on the sick-list, those men still well had plenty to do in looking after them. Amongst other things, it struck me that the perpetual recurrence of the 'Dead March' must have a most depressing effect upon those in hospital, and I gave stringent orders that it was not to be played upon leaving the barracks, but only when the funeral party entered the cemetery, about two miles off.

"Now amongst the sick was a very smart young non-commissioned officer, in whom I took great interest. I don't even now know his history, but he was a very superior man, of evidently good education, very steady, and with his whole soul in his work. He was already a sergeant, and I had little doubt in due course would have, at all events, the option of a commission. I went round the hospital myself every morning at that time, and upon the occasion to which I am referring did so as usual. I stopped by Daventry's bed, as I often used to say a few words to him, and ask how he was getting on.

"'Capitally, thank you, sir; I hope to be about again in a few days now,' he replied.

"'Yes, Major,' said the Doctor, 'he's pulled through, I'm glad to say, and will be on the convalescent-list to-morrow or next day. About again, Daventry, is tall talking; we shall have to keep you a little to regain your strength. You won't be fit for duty for a good week yet.'

"I said something cheering to the man, and passed on. Having finished my rounds, I got on my horse and cantered off to a bungalow, about a mile from the barracks, where lived some friends with whom I was engaged to breakfast. I swung myself out of the saddle, shook hands with my hostess, who was lounging in the verandah, when suddenly on my ear swelled the solemn cadence of the 'Dead March.' I listened, and yes, distinctly as ever, the grand melancholy wail came across the open plain between me and the barracks.

"'Please excuse me,' I said, 'for fifteen minutes; I must just canter back to our lines.

I have issued a stringent order, and can hear it is being disobeyed.'

"She laughed as she said, 'What a terrible commanding officer, who can even *hear* infractions of his orders at this distance!'

"I looked at her for a moment, and then could not help replying,

"'I don't see much to laugh at in that air ever. You must have heard it as well as myself.'

"'I heard nothing, I assure you.'

"'You did not hear our band playing the 'Dead March'?'

"'Certainly not. I heard no band whatever.'

"Saying once more I would be back in a few minutes, I jumped upon my horse and galloped to the barracks. No, there was no sign of a funeral party anywhere, and the men on guard said they had seen nothing of one, nor had they heard the band. I rode straight to the band-room. They were not at practice even, nor had they been that morning. It was bewildering; nobody had heard the sad

melody but myself. I was about to canter back to breakfast, when it occurred to me to call at the hospital. I did so, and without getting off my horse inquired if any death had taken place since I had left it half an hour before. In a minute or two the doctor came out.

"'Odd what made you come back to ask, Major,' he said, 'but poor Daventry dropped dead of heart complaint while dressing himself. I have no doubt of the actual cause of death, although I've not of course as yet made a *post mortem*. He had an affection of the heart, of which we knew nothing.'"

"He must have died exactly at the time I heard the 'Dead March.'"

"Curious that, very," ejaculated the Guardsman, in manner more serious than was his wont. "Of course, you have no explanation to give of hearing the 'Dead March'?"

"None whatever," rejoined the Colonel.

"And you, Doctor?" inquired the inquisitive youth of the Household Brigade.

"Well, premising that I can narrate a still

more inexplicable story, I will, from the sceptic's point of view, say that you might attribute it to highly-strung nervous tension. You see, the Colonel was naturally very anxious about his men. He no doubt fidgeted himself even in his own quarters about the combatting of the epidemic; was engaged in constant consultation with his medical men; issued many sanitary orders, including that concerning the 'Dead March.' It is quite possible that he might imagine he heard it. But the death of Daventry from an unexpected cause is a very curious coincidence, to say the least of it, and of course utterly defying explanation."

"And your own case, Doctor; what was that?" inquired the Colonel, as he lit an enormous cabana. "Tell us your experience."

"Ah, do!" interposed the host, as his friends said he never spoke much, but always to the point when he did open his lips.

"I shall be most happy," rejoined the Doctor, "if you don't mind a rather long yarn for an occasion of this sort."

"One second, while I open this bottle of soda-water," exclaimed Resley. "Ah, off she goes! Now, monsieur, I am all attention, and immensely curious."

"Well, it is some twenty years ago now that a small matter of business took me down to Cambridge—took me also at very short notice; and it was a matter of importance to me to catch the very first train I could compass. A rapid look into *Bradshaw*, and I made up my mind that it was just possible to catch the 2.30, a fast one; and without more ado I tumbled my things into a small portmanteau, while my servant dashed off to secure a cab. No, there was no particular bad luck about it. I lost no time getting my traps together, and the cab was at the door by the time I had done so. I encountered no particular block, and the horse was quite equal to the average of his kind; but despite all this, I was just done—I missed my train by about three minutes. Miscalculation, I suppose; at all events, there was nothing for it but to wait for the next, which was a slow one. For the next

half-hour I was condemned to kick my heels about the station; but I cared less about that than the fact that I was condemned to travel by the parliamentary. I got my ticket; I lounged about the station, bought papers I didn't want; had something to drink, which I wanted less; got weighed, which I wanted still less again—in short, perpetrated all the usual fooleries of the disappointed traveller. At last the bell rang, and I turned to my already engaged seat. We were off at last, and I began to take stock of my fellow-travellers. They were three. Opposite to me was a very nice-looking girl, of extremely modest appearance, well and neatly dressed, and yet *comme il faut* as everything about her was, from her gloves to her boots, it was evidently more the result of excellent taste than much expenditure. A stout well-to-do couple occupied the corresponding corners on the far side, while the centre seats were vacant, except for the wraps, travelling-bags, &c., which we had amongst us deposited upon them. As prosaic a quartette as you would

hope to find—a middle-aged doctor, a quiet ladylike girl, and a well-to-do tradesman, or man of business, and his wife. An ear-piercing whistle, the bell rings once more, and we are off. I subside into my *Times*, and my fair *vis-à-vis* into a yellow-covered novel. Rather more than half an hour had elapsed. I was dozing over the leading article, when I was roused by the slackening of the train and screams of 'Waltham!' in every note of the railway porter's gamut. The young lady dropped her book into her lap, and gazed listlessly out of the window. Suddenly, to my astonishment, her face lit up with evident surprise; she half rose, as if to let down the window; she looked puzzled, and finally sank back in her seat just as the train moved on. Whatever she had seen or whatever might be the cause, it was quite evident that my opposite neighbour was somewhat uneasy. She had only just recovered when we glided into Broxbourne Junction. Again she looked out on the platform, and was clearly much struck with something she saw; attempted to

rise, then turning pale as death sank back, and I really thought was going off in a faint. However, she recovered herself by a violent effort, and I then ventured to say,

"'Excuse me, but I am afraid you are very unwell. I am a medical man, and old enough to be your father; if you think I can be of any use to you, my professional knowledge is entirely at your service.'

"'She thanked me, said she had felt rather faint, but that it was all over now, and she required nothing.'

"I bowed, and once more betook myself to my *Times*. My *vis-à-vis* resumed her novel, but I noticed that her hands shook a little, that there was a slight nervous quiver about the mouth, and that her reading was sheer pretence. As we ran into Bishop's Stortford I could see her nerve herself, or, as Resley would phrase it, regularly 'pull herself together.' She set her lips tight, and then looked determinedly out upon the platform. All the previous symptoms immediately recurred. Whatever it was she saw occasioned

her such agitation that, though apparently half desirous to leave the carriage, she was unable to do so. She turned white to her very lips, and then as before sank back exhausted into her seat. I asked her if I should call for a glass of water, but she shook her head in the negative, and once more we resumed our journey. She looked so wretchedly unwell that I could not resist once more proffering assistance and advice.

"'You are evidently, to a professional man, extremely unwell, and I cannot help thinking a glass of wine would be of great service to you just now. I have a large flask in my travelling-bag, and I wish you would let me give you one, even if you think I can be of no further use to you.'

"'You are very kind,' she rejoined, with a faint smile, 'and I am so utterly unnerved I shall be only too thankful for it.'

"I filled the silver cup at the bottom of the flask and handed it to her. She drank it, and then said, 'I have determined to consult you. I am so utterly bewildered I do not know

what to do. One thing only I ask you: promise, if you think me fanciful and foolish, not to laugh at me. I feel much too hysterical just at present to bear that.'

"Of course I readily gave the required pledge, and then she began, blushing slightly as she did so: 'I must tell you, to commence with, that I am on my way to be married, and that I have arranged to meet my *fiancé* at Cambridge. You see, sir, I am not rich, neither is he. I get my living by teaching music and occasional concert-singing, while my husband that is to be, he is an architect, but as yet, like myself, works hard for moderate remuneration. We can neither of us afford a long honeymoon. Ah, we are to have that a little later on, he says, when we are richer; then I am to see Paris and the Rhine, perhaps even Venice—who knows? Frank is so clever, and industrious, that he is sure to be able to take a long holiday ere long. Well, at every station we have stopped I have seen Frank on the platform beckoning to me to get out, and I have felt utterly powerless to obey him.

Just as I rise to open the door he disappears mysteriously. What can it mean? Something terrible must have happened to him. If it were really he, why, he would come to me, of course, and take me out of the carriage. I am not superstitious, nor yet particularly imaginative. When I looked out at Waltham it was with the idlest curiosity. What do you think of it? What shall I do? I should like to get out if I see him again, and yet I have a firm presentiment that I shall not find him if I do.'

"'Wait a minute,' I replied, 'and allow me to just look at a time-table. Ah, I see the next station we stop at is at Audley End, and that we are not due there for a good quarter of an hour. Will you allow me to ask you two or three commonplace questions?'

"She bowed assent.

"'I presume you are in your ordinary health, and are feeling no exhaustion from want of food, extra work, or slight excitement?'

"'Certainly; I was in most excellent health

and spirits when I left Liverpool-street, with the happiest thoughts a girl can well have. To be on her way to be married to the man she loves would make any woman's heart glow as mine did. And now I am trembling with the apprehension that something frightful has happened to Frank. I can form no conception what, but I feel terrified at the idea of what I am to learn at Cambridge.'

"'Don't be nervous. I have a strong idea things will come right in the end. Now tell me, have you and your intended ever dabbled in spiritualism, mesmerism, or any other of the psychological studies of the day?'

"'Decidedly not. We neither of us have time or inclination to think of such matters.'

"'One question more, although from what you tell me it is nearly superfluous. You have not lately been troubled with bad dreams, restless nights, or nervous affection?'

"She shook her head and murmured, 'What had I better do?'

"'Take another glass of sherry, in the first place—believe me, you require it—and then

give me five minutes to think the thing over.'

"She complied with my request, and then leant back in her seat pale, silent, and expectant.

"I was no great believer in spiritual apparitions—even those best authenticated, I held, might perhaps have been explained could they have been subjected at the time to cool critical investigation—but I was equally aware that it is sometimes good policy to humour such hallucinations. This lady was evidently suffering acutely. My interest was aroused in her story, and it struck me that I could serve her better, in case there should turn out anything to justify her apprehension, if I won her confidence thoroughly. Moreover, if her intended husband should not be at Cambridge, or there should be news of anything having happened to him, it was better that she should not receive it abruptly on the platform, but have it broken to her more gradually. All rather illogical reasoning, which I can't pretend to justify; but please to remember this is an

irregular case, and rather outside our ordinary experiences. In such circumstances the rule of thumb is useless to adhere to.

"'My mind is made up,' I said quietly at last. 'My advice is at your disposal. I trust it may meet your approval.'

"'I am so bewildered, sir,' she replied, with quivering lips, 'that I shall be only too thankful to rely upon your judgment. I am too frightened to trust to my own.'

"'Good,' I said. 'I must now ask you for your name. Write it in this note-book.' She hesitated a moment, then took the book, wrote, and was about to return it, when I added, 'I want the name of your intended husband also; these are essentials to my plans.'

"She wrote that down, and then gazed eagerly into my face.

"'Now,' I continued, 'when we come to Audley End I want you to look out on the platform. If you see your lover, point him out to me, in the first place; secondly, if he beckons to you, get out whether I can see him or not. I will take care that the door shall be

opened, and will assist you. Don't trouble about anything except what you have in the carriage; I will look after your baggage at Cambridge. Your trunks are addressed, I presume. Women's baggage usually is; men's, never. I shall easily make out your intended on the platform, depend upon it. For you, you will remain at Audley End till you receive our telegram from Cambridge telling you, I trust, to come on by the next train, and that your fears are groundless.'

"'You are very good to me, sir,' she replied softly, 'and I submit implicitly to your directions; but pray—pray remember that I shall in all likelihood be passing a terrible time at Audley End.'

"'I understand. But it is only forty minutes on to Cambridge; you ought to get your telegram within the hour.'

"'Thank you so much;' and as she spoke the slackening of the train gave notice that we were running into Audley End.

"As we glided alongside the platform my fair friend suddenly exclaimed,

"'There's Frank! Don't you see him?' she continued, clutching me by the wrist in her excitement. 'A tall dark man in a light shooting suit—there by the waiting-room door. Ah, he is beckoning me again—look! I'm to go, you say. Stay, where is he? where did he go? Did he turn into the waiting-room?'

"The girl's face was white as a sheet; her voice shook, and her eyes were dilated with excitement. But although I gazed keenly in the direction she indicated, I could see no one who at all answered her description. She gave slight symptoms of becoming hysterical, so I somewhat roughly reminded her of our pact.

"'Come,' I exclaimed, 'remember you are to get out. I can see nothing of the man you describe; but do you fulfil your promise, and I will adhere to mine;' and as I spoke I opened the door and assisted her out. She was plucky, for she trembled from head to foot, and it was evidently as much as she could do to step from the carriage and grasp her belongings.

"'Telegraph as soon as possible, for God's

sake!' she whispered, as I pressed her hand and bade her good-bye.

"'I promise not to lose a minute,' was my reply.

"A slight change had taken place in the society of our compartment. I found, on resuming my seat, two gentlemen, apparently in the commercial line, had got in, one of whom had taken the seat opposite to myself, in the corner previously occupied by my nervous and slightly-hysterical companion. Their conversation gave me the clue to their calling; and that slight curiosity about them once appeased, I paid little heed to what they were saying, but became absorbed in speculation anent the conclusion of my adventure. Was this spectre signal for good or evil? And what should I find awaiting me at Cambridge?

"We had left Audley End some ten or twelve minutes, when came a mighty crash, a splintering of glass and timber, and we were all in a confused heap in the centre of the compartment. Our carriage reared up on end; screams and cries of terror fell upon our ears;

a horrible feeling of what was to happen next, succeeded by a ghastly sense of movement being at a standstill. Then more shrieks, when, bursting open the door, I jumped from the carriage on to the six-foot way, fell, and arose, shook, bruised, cut a little, but not materially injured. I could feel the blood trickling down my cheek, but was quite alive to the fact that no serious injury had happened to myself. Stretched by the side of the rails was the guard, senseless, and bathed in blood; while from the various carriages scrambled out the affrighted inmates.

"All great accidents demonstrate that presence of mind is the gift of the few; the panic-stricken passengers, as a rule, threw themselves from the doors much as I had done, experiencing in consequence a similar shaking to myself. The casualties of railway collisions are invariably largely augmented in this way. One of the commercial gentlemen in our compartment followed my example, and was punished still worse for his folly than I was. Like me, he fell, and was quite dazed

and foolish from the shock. I helped out the elderly couple I mentioned as being within the carriage at starting, and was about to see of what assistance I could be elsewhere, when my attention was arrested by the tremulous exclamation,

"'O Lord, where's Bob?'

"It was the commercial gentleman who spoke, and for the first time I became aware that his companion was missing. I looked round, but could see nothing of him. Suddenly it struck me that he might be still in the carriage. I scrambled up and got in. 'To say where Bob was' would be to solve the great mystery. There, in the seat lately occupied by my fair *vis-à-vis*, lay her luckless successor in a confused heap, for which attitude a fearful contusion on the temple at once accounted. I felt his pulse, put my hand on his heart, raised the eyelid, but it admitted of no doubt whatever; he would never move finger or tongue again in this world. Poor 'Bob' had dreed his doom, and his companion got quite hysterical in his wailings over his dead friend.

"Now this, gentlemen, is a curious coincidence, to say the least of it. Although there were some half-dozen people badly hurt; although there were a good score cut, bruised, and otherwise knocked about, the sole person killed outright was my unfortunate opposite neighbour."

The Doctor paused, and looked round with the air of a man who had made his point.

"Most extraordinary," exclaimed the Guardsman. "But you went on to Cambridge, I suppose?"

"Certainly: after a delay of an hour or so, we were forwarded on to Cambridge, and there I duly fulfilled my promise. I had little difficulty, from the description given me, in making out the lover on the platform, and a terrible state of anxiety it was my privilege to release him from. They had received intelligence of the accident there, but as yet knew nothing of who were hurt in it, and his agitation at not finding his *fiancée* in the train was very great. I of course told him of her safety, and no sooner had he claimed her

boxes than he despatched a telegram to Audley End. I dined with them the next day, and though rather oppressed with their gratitude for services which I felt I had never rendered, was charmed with the pair of them. Much as they pressed me, I was unable to stay for the marriage, which, however, duly came off within forty-eight hours. My fair friend, I am delighted to say, proved right in her estimate of her lover's abilities. He is a leading man in his profession now, and I fancy there are no pecuniary objections to their taking a run to Paris or Venice whenever he can spare the time."

"That is a genuine experience, I presume, Doctor?" observed the Colonel.

"Most undoubtedly, with neither exaggeration nor embellishment."

"And how do you explain it?" inquired the Guardsman. "Or stop; that is an absurd question. Have you any theory that might in some sort account for it?"

"None whatever. It is my one ghostly experience, and I do not pretend to elucidate

it. I give it you, remember, as actually true, and think that Mrs. —— (I shall not give you her name) is perhaps as right in her theory as any of us are likely to be in our conjectures—to wit, that Hymen himself still takes interest in the successful accomplishment of a genuine love-match."

"He ought, he ought," observed the Guardsman, meditatively wagging his precocious head. "They are tolerably rare in these days."

"But I am not alluding to your London whirlpool," rejoined the Doctor testily, as he lit his bedroom candle.

"No, of course not; you couldn't be," rejoined that young philosopher, as he threw his cigar into the grate. "*They* don't believe in much, but especially are they incredulous concerning ghosts and love-matches. Good night, and a merry Christmas to you all!"

JOHANNA.

A Crimean Reminiscence.

"Trink Trink, Drink Drink,
Death to the jade;
The Moke, that broke
The Light Brigade."

—*Camp Song.*

THAT terrible winter of '54-'55 is over, and the army of the Crimea, like nature and the bears, has shaken off its lethargy. The apathy that had crept over it is dissipated. Officers have resumed the matutinal tub, and the force generally has rid itself of the incrusted-mud, dirt and accumulations of those dire months of cold, wet, misery and short rations. Men's pulses quicken with the spring-time, and the blood once more rushes through their veins as the sap rises in the trees. Provisions are plentiful. Brandy has fallen from twelve shillings to

six, and "Bass" become once more attainable on a subaltern's resources. Even the siege awakes from its stupor, and instead of the solemn silence broken only by an occasional shot from the Muscovite, or the fierce rattle of musketry which proclaims a sortie, the boom of the big gun is once more heard pretty constantly—grim cuckoos of the Crimea loudly shrieking that those days of darkness, disease and scarcity are at length done with. There is no doubt plenty of fighting before them, but then it will be done upon full stomachs, and only let the commissariat work satisfactorily and the British soldier has never grumbled about hard knocks. The Russ has seized the "Mamelon," and the investment of Sevastopol bids fair to rival that of Troy—albeit that no Achilles is skulking in his tent, and the chiefs both of Gaul and Saxon are only too keen to head the assault.

Put Englishmen down where you will, and they will endeavour to re-produce the sports of their native land. They *will* race, they

will play cricket, they *will* fabricate the best imitation of fox-hunting that circumstances will admit of. In India they ride to pig. In the Crimea they chased the dog. The monotony of a big siege can be only understood by those who have experienced it, whether within or without the place, and at this time the question might have been well mooted as to which side was really besieged, the allied army being as completely invested itself as was Sevastopol. Men will snatch at any diversion on such occasions, and one result of an army being stationary is generally to produce a considerable amount of gaming. I have no doubt that they played as hard as they swore in that famous army of Flanders, and one can imagine that a good deal of "unlimited" went on in the lines of Torres Vedras. Save when famine prices rule—ofttimes the case in the history of sieges—you cannot spend all your money in eating and drinking, and there is much excitement to be got out of the miniature battlefield of the card table.

Though the siege had woke up, and men were again being daily rolled over like rabbits in a "hot corner," there was no reason that those whose turn had yet to come should not divert themselves. Meeting one's fate in the trenches seemed little to men who had seen their comrades literally rot away from insufficiency of clothes, of food, and firing,—

"Dum vivimus, vivamus,"

and to some of the more enterprising spirits it occurred that the time was come to get up a race meeting. It found favour in the eyes of the authorities. It helped to break the monotony of the camp life, and once started, the ball rolled merrily on. Each division had its races, and "meeting" followed "meeting" as rapidly as they do at Newmarket.

It was some few nights before one of these 'meetings," that in a tent of which the sides had been thrown widely back, two young gentlemen might have been seen anxiously discussing their prospects at the forthcoming races. They were subalterns in the same

troop—sworn allies too, and of very sporting tendencies—and if there was one thing they loved more dearly than another, it was the successful landing of a garrison race. Their conversation at the present moment was tinged with melancholy. Belonging to a regiment that had been out since the commencement of the war, and shared in the glorious charge of Balaclava, it was not much to be wondered that their stock of horseflesh was rather limited. That fair-haired cornet, Ramsey by name, left his first charger behind him in the Balaclava valley, on that memorable October day; and only knows that he came out of the scrape on somebody else's; while the winter and short rations had disposed of both those of his chum. They could only between them muster one horse, that even their sanguine minds regarded as likely to compete successfully on the plateau next Friday, and that animal's forlorn chance had been effectually extinguished by his going lame that very morning.

"Deuced hard luck," ejaculated the cornet,

"to think that we have nothing to run; and even if old Chanticleer had kept right, I don't suppose he would have got within hail."

"No," replied Tom Leader, "he could go about quick enough to enable you or me just to toddle along behind and see the race, and that's about all."

"And you don't fancy your 'mount' in the 'Cup,' either?"

"No, the 'Tenth' fellows swear he can't lose; they are good to back it so long as any one will lay. I don't pretend to understand much about Arabs, but I rode the horse a gallop this morning, and told them when I got down that he felt like a buck rabbit under me. He scuttles along and goes fast, but he'd be bound to be outstridden by an English thoroughbred. I wish to Heaven either you or I had one with which to have a cut at him."

"I tell you what, Tom," rejoined the cornet, sucking hard at his pipe,—"The 'Eleventh' fellows are certain to enter 'Game-

cock'; now he is a pretty good horse that—and if you are right in your conjectures, that big raking stride of his will wear you down."

"Of course it will," said Leader, "and that's what I tell them, but they shut me up by saying, 'Oh, you don't understand Arabs; ride him all the way and you will see what a mess he'll make of anything there is out here.'"

"Well, they have just come from India, and of course ought to know more about Arabs than we do; still, I am of your way of thinking; a big horse must beat a little one supposing them to be of something like similar quality. It's very sad, Tom, but we shall have to content ourselves by simply taking the 'moke' race. Thank goodness! that mule of yours is the best in the whole of the Crimea."

"By Jove! I don't know about that—we have swept the board so far—but I hear the 'Guards' have got a new importation in that way; they have got a mule as big as a giraffe, and, I hear, mean to take the wind out of my sails at this next 'meeting.'"

"Well, Tom, we'll live in hopes; they'll back their opinion, and if the 'Guards' are in earnest, it will be the most sporting event of the 'meeting'—why, the Light Brigade will go their bottom dollar on your 'moke.' A mule that *can* and *will* gallop is not to be picked up every day."

"No, and mine has, as you know, its peculiarity."

"Yes, you'll of course want me to give you a lead home on the 'Uncle,' as usual."

"Just so, and pray remember not to let that stable secret escape you.—It's time to turn in"—and Leader began leisurely to divest himself of his jacket, &c., while his brother subaltern closed the tent.

The scene of the above conversation was that little grassy amphitheatre near Balaclava on which the fragments of the Light Brigade were encamped. They had been recently reinforced by the Tenth Hussars, and the Twelfth Lancers from India, and these new regiments were mounted upon Arabs in the speed and endurance of which some of them

believed implicitly, holding that in the matter of endurance, at all events, the Arab was very superior to the English thoroughbred, and strange to relate, a distinguished ornament, belonging to one of these regiments—it would be invidious to particularize which—was an unseen auditor of the talk between Leader and the cornet. Mr. William—or, as he was more familiarly known to his friends, Bill Birch—was a gentleman who had undergone a somewhat chequered career. He had commenced life in a racing stable at Newmarket, but he unfortunately outgrew his vocation, becoming too heavy in a short time to be of any use to his employer. There were, of course, plenty of situations open to a young man of his experience with horses, but the Turf had such a peculiar fascination for Mr. Birch that he felt unable to tear himself away from Newmarket. It was, sad to say, the blackest side of racing that had a charm for him. His admiration of a well-conceived robbery was unbounded, and he speedily became a "tout" and "hanger on" of race-

courses. That the corruption of stable-boys would occur to a genius of this description was certain; not only in his late stable, but also in many others, had he made several acquaintances of that class. He soon formed a connection with two or three shady and unscrupulous bookmakers, and was thereby enabled to dangle such money temptations before the eyes of the boys as to procure him imformation on more than one occasion. Unfortunately for himself, Mr. Birch's enterprising disposition prompted him to go rather further than this, and a daring attempt to "nobble" the favourite of an important race caused him to be warned off the Heath, and so besmirched his name as to render him cemparatively innocuous; the opportunities of the known robber being rather limited as compared with those of the undetected pick-pocket. After this exposé Mr. Bill Birch found himself in very low water. To get honest work of any kind had become now almost an impossibility for him, as there was nobody to whom he could refer for a character,

while the area of his nefarious pursuits had now become so circumscribed as to afford him but a bare pittance; and one fine afternoon the complete emptiness of both his stomach and his pockets betrayed him into the hands of the recruiting sergeant. He had tolerable common sense, and his eyes were speedily opened to the fact that military discipline was by no means to be trifled with. He bowed his head submissively to the yoke, and during the short time he had been in the regiment had earned for himself a moderately good character, so much so that when his corps was ordered from India, one of his officers took him for his bâtman.

But when Mr. Birch found himself in the Crimea in the position of an officer's servant, and with race meetings going on all rouud him, his predatory instincts were once more aroused, and he began to look hungrily around for an opportunity of plunder. He was passing Mr. Leader's tent, quite accidentally, when his attention was arrested by the voices of its inmates. He paused for a

moment, and heard Tom Leader express his disbelief in the Arab, and with that opinion, as might be anticipated, the ex-Newmarket stable-boy most thoroughly coincided. "I don't know who he is," he muttered; "but here's a chap who knows what he is talking about; I'd like to hear a little more of his say;" and with that Bill Birch glided out of the moonlight into the shadow, and stretched himself on the ground with his ear against the curtain of the tent. When he rose and walked away some few minutes afterwards he felt, in his own vernacular, that he was on the scent of "a good thing." That hint of there being a stable secret in connection with the mule, made Mr. Birch's pulses quite tingle. The possibility of perpetrating a small turf robbery, even if only over a mule race, had as much attraction for him as the deadly dram for the habitual drunkard. That sentence had told who the speaker was. He knew that mule well. He had seen Mr. Leader win upon it more than once, and he knew moreover that that gentleman was not

only a fair gentleman "jock," but accounted clever and well versed in turf mysteries by all the Light Brigade. Now the question was, what was the secret about this mule? and what the devil was the "Uncle?" a quadruped of some sort evidently, as it had been arranged that the other speaker was to give the mule a "lead" home. Now, what was the meaning of that? Would it be allowed? but he supposed they were not very particular about what they did in a "moke" race.

Turning all things over in his own mind Mr. Birch came to the conclusion that there was much money to be made out of this if he could but cipher out the mystery of that mule. Mr. Birch's ideas of a good thing were that his antagonist should be made perfectly safe. Now, it occurred to him that he would not be able to get access to the mule of the Guards without perhaps exciting suspicion. This was somewhat a case of "conscience makes cowards of us all," for it was likely to cross the mind of nobody amongst the Guards that their mule ran a risk of being "got at."

In the Light Brigade he thought it was different. As one of them, there would be nothing suspicious in his being about the "lines" of an adjoining regiment, and consequently it would be at his discretion whether Mr. Leader's mule should win or not. Mr. Birch knew perfectly well that the soldiers bet as well as their officers on these occasions, and to that philosopher it was perfectly immaterial from whom he won money so that he did win it. Half-crowns were half-crowns, he opined, whether they came out of the pockets of the Guards or out of the pockets of his comrades of the Light Brigade. Mr. Birch knew that rivalry between two regiments on the race course at times led to a good deal of money changing hands, and he further knew that the men would be sure to follow their officers in this respect. Let him only unravel the secret of this mule and then he would settle what course it were best to pursue, that is to say, by what means he—Trooper Birch—could sweep most coin into his own rascally and covetous pockets.

Early the next morning Mr. Birch made his appearance in the "lines" of the —— Light Dragoons, and commenced chatting affably with the officers' servants over the forthcoming race meeting. He dexterously contrived to make out Mr. Leader's bâtman, and cleverly flattered that grim visaged retainer on the subject of his master's horsemanship. Old Burrows, who had held the post ever since Tom Leader first joined the regiment some five years ago, was very proud of his young master's performances on the race course. His features relaxed as he remarked, "He didn't think there was any of 'em as could give Mr. Leader a pound;" and then Mr. Birch proposed an adjournment to an adjacent canteen, expressing a hope that his new acquaintance would join him in a glass of something "short," just to drink to their better knowledge of each other.

"I am afraid your regiment has nothing to run this time," observed Birch; "it's a pity with such a nice rider as Mr. Leader amongst you."

"No, we ain't nothing to run now," replied Burrows, "we lost all our horses in the winter and in the "charge;" but don't you be afraid; Mr. Leader will get plenty of riding. He is pretty well known in the army as just one of the best they've got."

"I thought I heard some of our officers talking the other day about a horse you had called the 'Uncle,' or some such name."

"Uncle, Uncle," replied Burrows, as he sipped his liquor leisurely, "we ain't never had a horse of that name during the sixteen years I have been in the regiment—stop," he continued, giving vent to a great guffaw, you must have heard 'em speaking of that black bât pony of Mr. Ramsay's; he calls him 'Uncle Tom,' because he is a black slave."

"But I suppose he is smart amongst ponies," observed Mr. Birch.

"Not a bit, he is just a useful hack, tame as a dog and quiet as a sheep, an easy cantering little beggar you might go to sleep upon."

Mr. Birch was puzzled; a pony of this description could clearly play no important

part at the forthcoming races, and yet it was quite evident that Messrs. Leader and Ramsay considered him to be a very important factor in the mule race. Having failed to elicit anything by his insidious questions concerning the pony, Mr. Birch thought he would change his tactics and see if he could get at what he wanted to know from another point.

"That's a wonderful clever mule of yours," he observed; "I have seen many finer, but the great difficulty about them in a racing point of view, is that you never can be certain that they will go when you want them to."

"That's just, you see, because people don't take the trouble to understand them. They have their peculiarities like horses, only more so. Well, thank'ee—yes, I don't mind if I do it once more," and Mr. Burrows held out his glass to be replenished. "Now, of all the whimsical devils out, there's nothing like a mule. Don't you make a mistake and think he's a fool—'cos he ain't—but he has his whims, and if you don't humour him in them,

dash me if he will humour you in anything."

"And pray what's your mule's whim?"

"That's tellings, my lad," replied Burrows with a knowing wink; "you don't go about telling folks what's the soft place in your horse when you are either going to sell him or race him. No, that's for the public to find out if they can, and a mule's crotchets are none so easy to get at. If so be your master ever buys our 'moke,' well, then I'll give you a wrinkle concerning him."

Burrows was perfectly right in his theory. Far from being stupid the mule is a very intelligent animal, and that obstinacy so persistently laid to his charge is designated in humanity as having very decided opinions. He can make up his mind and stick to it, and cares no more under such circumstances for the "argumentum ad hominem" than did Hazlitt, who, it is narrated, on one occasion declared that "he did not mind being knocked down as long as he had the best of the argument." One thing, however, was quite clear

to Mr. Birch, to wit, that he was not likely to get the information he was in search of out of Burrows.

It wanted but three days to the races in question, which were those of the Second Division, and most of the events were closed—that is to say, horses competing required to be the property of officers of that Division—but there were two events thrown open to the whole army, and about those both the chaff and the wagering waxed furious. The first of these was the "All Army" Cup, and in that the oft-debated question would be tried as to whether the Arab or the English horse was the better over a couple of miles. The regiments from India who, be it remembered, were mounted on Arabs, placed implicit confidence in the champion they had selected to dispose of any English horse in the Crimea. They had not themselves arrived till all the miseries of that first winter were passed, and consequently made a brave show by the side of the remainder of the Brigade, who after that ride so deadly, in fact so deathless in

story, had gone through a hard time of it. They thought it very impossible that they should have to meet an English race-horse, while the champion they had selected to do battle for them had won two or three fair races in India amongst Arabs. True, they knew that this horse "Gamecock" could gallop a bit, and that he had been very successful on the race-course in the Crimea, but, they agreed, he was not a race horse; he did not arrive here very much before we did ourselves, and with such a pull in condition it was no very great performance to have beaten all these half-starved horses that had been out all the time; on the other hand, the admirers of "Gamecock" urged that he had beaten everything out there easily, that they didn't believe in time-tests or Arab horses, and that until the arrival of some fresh importation of horseflesh from England, "Gamecock" would remain champion of the Chersonese, and that his comb was by no manner of means to be cut by anything brought from India.

The second open race was the "mule," or,

as it was usually designated, the "moke" race, and here again the army generally clung fondly to the established champion of that pastime, Mr. Leader's "Johanna"; but more particularly had this race resolved itself into a duel between the Light Cavalry Brigade and the Brigade of Guards, and the betting was quite as heavy upon it as it was on the "All Army" Cup. Mr. Birch had foreseen that this would probably be the case; and now finding that his anticipations are realized—for sporting intelligence on these occasions swiftly travels from the mess-room to the barrack-room, from the tents of the officers to those of the men—positively hungered for the opportunity of making this race a certainty for the Guards. All his comrades are wild to lay odds upon Mr. Leader's "Johanna," and Mr. Birch loses no chance of accommodating them, and in fact has literally laid against the mule to lose what represents a positive fortune to a trooper of Dragoons. He has quite made up his mind to lame "Johanna" the night before the race; but upon inspecting her

bivouac. Mr. Birch is much disconcerted. Albeit Tom Leader has lost his horses, it must not be supposed that he was without horse-flesh of any kind, although he owned nothing that had any pretensions to race or could fairly be called a charger. He had a couple of ponies and a barb, the latter doing duty as a charger *pro tem.;* and "Johanna" was picketed with these in rear of the officers' tents. No difficulty about approaching these at night, but for one thing. Burrows had built himself a shanty close to his master's horses, a very tumble-down looking tenement, composed chiefly of boards and canvas, but still tolerably weatherproof; he had moreover obtained leave to sleep in this abode of his own devising; and not only was the veteran wont to be suspicious concerning the safety of his charges whenever they had racing engagements, but he was also proprietor of a restless lynx-eared mongrel dog that he had picked up on the march from the Alma. Footsteps about Burrows' residence would be as certain to bring "Musco" tumbling and yelping out

of the tent, as they would to bring his master after him; so, very much to his chagrin, Mr. Birch found that his proposed villany was by no means so easy of execution as he had anticipated. He had, in his way, plunged as recklessly as ever did the leading turfites at Epsom or Newmarket; and though quite capable of anything, could not for the life of him see how he was to make this race "the good thing" he had intended it to be. His idea of "a good thing" being, as before said, that whatever he had bet against should have no possible chance to win. An accident, however, gave Birch the clue he wanted, and enabled him to make a shrewd guess at the particular whim of "Johanna" that required humouring.

He was lounging the morning before the races in the —th Light Dragoon lines, when a plain, powerful black pony, that had evidently got loose from its picket, came galloping up whinnying, to where Burrows' charges were standing. The whinnying was immediately answered by "Johanna," who made the most

frantic efforts to escape from her picket. She was at length successful. The picket rope, frayed near the head collar, gave way, and "Johanna" cantered after her friend with every manifestation of delight. The two animals rubbed noses together, and caressed each other after the manner of their kind, the mule indeed being quite lavish in her endearments.

"What a bit of luck!" muttered Mr. Birch to himself. "I see it all now—that moke's whim is plain enough. She is wonderfully fond of the pony; that's the meaning of giving me a "lead" home with the "Uncle," is it? She'll follow the pony anywhere, and when they want her to do her best they just have "Uncle Tom" to lead her. I am sorry for you, gentlemen, but self-preservation requires that I should spoil your little game. I don't quite see my way into getting at the mule; but Mr. Ramsay's horses are not so closely guarded as Mr. Leader's, and if that black beggar don't come out on three legs to-morrow morning, my name is not Bill Birch; and so

saying, Mr. Birch strolled homewards with a light heart.

Great was young Ramsay's consternation when, on the morning of the races, his bâtman gravely informed him that "Uncle Tom" was dead lame.

"By Jove, Tom," he exclaimed,—"here's the 'Uncle' gone lame,—lame indeed!—lame is no name for it, he can't put his near hind leg to the ground."

"Hang it! I say—this is rather a sell! I've got a lot of money on this 'moke' race, and I'm blest if I know how 'Johanna' will take it when she finds her pet not there to come away from the distance with her. How did it happen?"

"That I can't tell you: but like you, I have got a deal of money on this race,—close upon three hundred pounds altogether; what the deuce are we to do?"

"Well, I tell you what it is, young 'un,'" replied Leader, "I've got pretty nearly as much on it as you have, and the 'Uncle's' going lame makes it a very

risky speculation; one never can depend upon a mule, and 'Johanna,' if she takes it into her head, could be quite as pig-headed as any of her breed. As her rider and owner I can't do anything, but you had better get up to the course in good time and 'hedge' as much as you can manage for both of us."

It is a lovely day in May, and on the plateau overlooking the valley of the Tchernaya a little after mid-day are gathered most of the officers of the Crimean army who chance to be off duty. A race-course shaped like a horse-shoe, has been staked out with the camp colours. A marquee, pitched at one end does duty as a weighing room, and an artillery waggon for the judge's box. Uniforms of all sorts, as may be well supposed, are there,—Horse, Foot and Artillery. The wearers are nearly all mounted, and the horse-flesh varies as much as does their attire, from the half-starved Turkish pony of the infantry subaltern to the big and well-cared for charger of the

staff officer. Conspicuous as ever the staff by their immaculate shirt collars, if only to show that there were a shirt or two left in the English army.

Three or four Divisional races of minor importance were satisfactorily disposed of, and then comes the big event of the day, the "All Army" Cup, of unusual interest upon this occasion (there is generally an "All Army" race in a Divisional meeting) as being a test of whether the English or the Arab is the better horse. There are four competitors, but the attention of the spectators is entirely concentrated upon two; that big bay horse, bestridden by a well-known officer of the Rifles, in dark blue jacket and black cap, and that flea-bitten grey which Tom Leader is riding. The horses present a marked contrast in point of size; "Gamecock" being a good sixteen hands high, while "Runjeet Sing," the Arab, would hardly have reached fifteen under the standard. The betting becomes pretty brisk; and though the Indian contingent stand

staunchly to their guns, and continue to back "Runjeet Sing" without flinching, yet the weight of public opinion is against them, and two to one is laid freely on "Gamecock" and the rifleman as the starter takes charge of the four. They are off at the first attempt, and no sooner have they settled into their stride, than Tom Leader, in obedience to orders, takes the Arab to the front and forces the running to the best of his ability. By the end of the first mile he has settled the two outsiders, and glances a little anxiously over his shoulder to see what has become of "Gamecock." But the rifleman is striding along at his ease, about two lengths behind him and evidently far from done with. "Exactly. what I told them," mutters Tom, "'Gamecock' is lying over me all the way;" he dares not drive his horse harder so far from home, but, when at the half-mile post, the English horse comes alongside, Tom feels it a case of do or die; if he cannot, in technical language, cut "Gamecock's" throat—that is to say—pump him out between this and home, the

superior stride of the English horse must tell and the Arab be beaten. He squeezes "Runjeet Sing" and begins to drive him all he knows, and the wiry little horse responded gallantly to the call. His pluck is undeniable, but it is all no use, and the rifleman shaking up "Gamecock" in the last hundred yards, glides in an easy winner by a length and a half.

"Sorry for you, Tom," said Ramsay, as they meet in the weighing tent; "but it is what you told me you expected, so I rather went for the gloves and have made pretty good thing out of your defeat. I have hedged some of our money about the 'moke' race, but they won't bet upon it till we come to it in the card."

Two or three more races disposed of, and then comes the concluding event of the day—the "moke" race. There are eight competitors; and of those, the three that attract the most attention are "Johanna"—well-known to the speculators as the crack performer of her kind—a very fine Spanish mule

belonging to the Guards that is about to make its debût, and a French mule, ridden by an officer of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, which attracts attention principally on account of its enormous size. The Guards' champion is a big mule, but fades into insignificance before this grey monster. The eight opponents collect at the starting post. Shirt sleeves, forage cap, and regimental trousers are the costume de rigeur for "moke" riding, and the jockeys sit well back on their animals' quarters, after the approved "coster" fashion. After some half-score attempts the starter is at last successful, and Tom Leader with considerable satisfaction gets off well in front on "Johanna," who is apparently in the best of tempers; still he knows the test has yet to come; that it will take place about two furlongs from home, where the mule has been accustomed to be picked up by her friend the "Uncle." "Johanna" sails away in front with pricked ears till she comes to the accustomed point, and then Leader sees with horror that she begins to look round

right and left for the pony. Another hundred and fifty yards and her anxiety evidently increases. She commences turning her head quite round in search of her friend, slackens her pace most perceptibly, and finally, when she arrives at the distance post and can see nothing of the pony, pulls up dead short, and in spite of all Leader's coaxing turns deliberately round with a view of making enquiries about "the Uncle's" whereabouts. Tom knows it is all up, the Guards' champion has been gradually overhauling him the last hundred yards or more, and now goes on with the running looking all over a winner; but he, too, is destined to meet defeat owing to an unexpected contretemps. There had been some foot races over the same ground the day before and just a hundred yards short of the actual winning post of to-day, had been placed another white post to mark the starting point for the race of that distance. Mistaking this for the actual goal —the guardsman eases his mule only to be startled by a wild uproar behind him,

"Houp, Houp, sacre bleu, I vin, goddam,—vite, vite, mechant — Houp, mille bombes. I vin, Houp, Houp, hurrah;" and before the guardsman can set his mule going again the Frenchman has shot past him, and the "moke" race of the Second Division fallen to our gallant allies.

There was sadness in the valley of Balaclava that night, and rueful mutterings as books were totted up, that the Gaul should have so got the better of the Saxon; but neither the Guards nor the Brigade had come to such unmitigated grief as might have been anticipated. The wagering in the main had been confined to backing their respective mules against each other, and in consequence of the unexpected victory of the Frenchman the large proportion of such bets were off. As for Mr. Birch, he got enongh out of the transaction to enable him to purchase his discharge shortly afterwards comfortably; while Tom Leader and Ramsay to this day narrate the story of their bad luck with regard to the

"moke" race of the Second Division, and wonder how "Uncle Tom" contrived so injudiciously to lame himself at such a critical moment for their fortunes; shaking their head sorrowfully, not so much over what they had lost, but over what they had missed winning.

SUPERFLUOUS SHOOTING.

"You don't believe in ghosts, Ranxeter—quite right. I do, because I've seen 'em. I didn't mind the first, but, by Jove! number two was a caution, and I don't want to see any more. I never, you see, had a taste for the horrible. Some men delight in monstrosities,—as inspecting the Morgue for instance; and George Selwyn, in days gone by, never missed an execution. It isn't my line."

The speaker, a good-looking man, of five and thirty, had taken possession of the hearth-rug, which, as is understood by all worshippers of nicotine, is the rostrum of her temples, and from thence had addressed the above harangue to his companions.

"All right, Cis, suffer me to remain in my

unbelief," rejoined the addressed, a slight wiry man, coiled up in one of the big lounging chairs; "meanwhile, as you are evidently suffering from a suppressed story, treat it like the gout, my boy—bring it out. It will go down pleasantly with the tobacco and fluids, I daresay."

"Well, I don't mind if I do. You none of you seem to have much to say, and that's a fact," laughed Cis Forrester. "I'll give you the result of my experiences as a warning:—It's a dozen years or so ago, when I was in the —th, that I and a brother sub. named Taylor received an invitation for the 12th of August to shoot with Hutchesson. We had all three been great chums at the University; and though he come into a handsome property on attaining his majority, and became at once immersed in London society, yet he never forgot his old College friends, and whenever we turned up in town always made much of us. You may guess how two fellows, who had been getting through the summer as best they might in a dull country

quarter, jumped at such a chance. We knew from experience that Hutchesson understood how to do things—that there would be pretty good shooting, the best of claret, and a tidy cook. In short, we so crowed about our invitation, that my captain, a cynical old beggar, vowed he'd get my leave stopped if I opened my mouth again about it. I need scarcely say I was mute after such a rating. We got, after a little parleying with the chief, leave for the last fortnight in August, and the evening of the 15th saw us at Chatton Lodge, not many miles from Barnard Castle, just in time for dinner.

"It was a quaintly built house, of no great antiquity, probably dating no further back than the end of the sixteenth century, but it was of fair size and very comfortable. You entered upon a small square hall, round which ran a gallery, and on which gallery four doors opened. Two were bedroom doors, two led to stairs and passages. The hall was furnished with a centre table, a writing table, lounging chairs, &c.; and if we had half an hour before

shooting we generally adjourned there to write our letters, look at the papers, &c. We usually smoked there also at night. Our party consisted of nine altogether. There was a capital old fellow, who, if he could not walk as he once could, shot straight as any of us. He had his wife and two most charming daughters with him. A barrister and his *sposa*,—two as agreeable people as one could well come across—Hutchesson, Taylor, and myself completed our circle. It was Elysium; so Taylor and I thought. Capital shooting all day, an excellent dinner, laughing, pleasant conversation, and music afterwards,—a pipe to wind up with—what more could a Sybarite of three or four-and-twenty want!

"Well, we had had a very pretty day at the grouse; if we did not make immense bags we had always fair sport;—another pleasant evening. We lit the ladies' bed-room candlesticks, and as we wended our way to the hall for the final pipe, we reflected ruefully that the morrow was our last day. Leave was up, and our colonel by no means to be trifled with

under those circumstances. We got our tobacco under weigh—there were only four of us—for the old Squire, the father of the two pretty girls in the house, did not smoke, and economized his strength by going in for a long sleep every night. We gossipped about what capital sport we had enjoyed—killed our birds over again—wished one and all that the fortnight could once more begin, and made up our minds to have at all events a great day on the morrow. The barrister, like Taylor and myself, had to depart the morning after. Now, you will please to bear in mind, there had been no talk whatever of ghosts, not only that evening, but on no other occasion during the fortnight. Hutchesson had never heard it hinted that Chatton Lodge was so inhabited, consequently there was nothing to dispose our minds to the discovery of apparitions. As I said before, the talk had been simply prosaic about our doings, when Hutchesson, happening to raise his eyes to the gallery, suddenly exclaimed, 'Halloa! who the devil are you, and what are you doing there?'

"We of course all looked upwards, and there, leaning over the balustrades was a young monk, his cowl thrown a little back, and contemplating the party with a melancholy aspect. He took no notice whatever of Hutchesson's questions, but remained perfectly immovable. We all saw him distinctly, and had plenty of time to notice that it was a remarkably handsome though sad face.

"Hutchesson once more vociferated, 'Confound it! will you speak?' then jumping up, seized a candle, and exclaiming, 'I mean to be in the joke anyway,' rushed upstairs. We all followed, but upon gaining the gallery there was nothing to be seen. We rushed to the doors leading from the two staircases, but search as we might, there was no trace whatever of our mysterious visitor. We re-adjourned to the hall and held high council over the affair. That we had been the victims of a practical joke we had no doubt—but who was the joker? We vowed that the next night we would know, should he or she dare to repeat it. In the meantime, we

agreed to keep strict silence on the subject. 'Your finger on your lip,' was our motto. We had another rare good walk over the heather the following day, a cheery, if a last dinner, and it was not till we were on the point of ascending to our respective rooms to exchange our evening clothes for smoking jackets, that I verily believe 'the monk' of our previous evening recurred to our memories.

"'By Jove!' exclaimed Taylor, 'do you suppose our mysterious friend will join our *séance* to-night?'

"'Can't say,' replied Hutchesson; 'but I have made elaborate preparations for his reception, if he does. Excuse me if I am a few minutes later than the rest of you in putting in my appearance, but I have one or two things to attend to before I come down.'

"We separated, and our pipes were in full blast before our host rejoined us.

"'Twenty minutes to the canonical hour,' he remarked. 'Now I mean to be at the bottom of this joke to-night; there are the

keys of your two rooms, which I have first searched and then taken the liberty of locking;' and as he spoke he handed the keys of our respective rooms to Taylor and myself.

"'I have not locked the passage doors, for the obvious reason that the jest cannot be carried on if we don't give the jester a chance; but there are wires which have been drawn across those two staircases in the last few minutes which mean stupendous croppers to the uninitiated. I will lift them, mind, before you go to bed; and now to give him a lesson. Don't suppose we shall want this, or would dare to use it, but I have brought it;' and so saying, he drew from his pocket one of the old fashioned Colt's revolvers of five-and-twenty years ago.

"It was of a pattern now obsolete, but they were terrible hard and close shooting pistols. They required re-cocking after every discharge, and their chief fault was that if the exploded cap did not remain on or fall clear of the nipple, it might stop the revolution of the chambers. In these days we should smile at

the very idea of caps at all, but my ghost is no yesterday apparition. We chatted on, and you may be sure, as the hand neared the twelve, there was many a furtive glance stole at the gallery. The clock chimed midnight, and our eyes were all rivetted on the balustrade over which the monk of the previous evening had leant—five minutes past twelve—ten.

"'The jest is played out—not deemed playable again at all events,' laughed our host.

"A sudden 'Good Lord!' from the barrister startled us all, and following his upward gaze, we espied looking over the balustrades a nun. Her hood also was thrown back, and exhibited a face that transfixed us all. To my dying day I shall remember that face, years ago though it is since I saw it, and though I only saw it that once. The face of a dark handsome woman of five-and-thirty, whose eyes seemed literally to flame at us. I was too young to form a true estimate of it, but I remember well the barrister—and he was engaged in much criminal practice—said

shiveringly next morning that he had never seen the face of a handsome woman that told such a story of sensuality and crime, a countenance indicative of most unbridled and unscrupulous passions.

"We all drew a deep breath of positive dismay, to put it mildly. I think our ideas about a practical joke got a trifle disconcerted; at all events mine did. Another few seconds and Hutchesson exclaimed, 'Our candles! and let's rush upstairs!' and, suiting the action to the word, he seized a bedroom candlestick, lit it, and led the way to the foot of one staircase, calling out as he did so 'Take the other staircase, Forrester and Taylor, and meet me on the landing.' We divided according to order, and ran up the respective staircases. Before I came to the top, I went a regular cropper, my candlestick was knocked out of my hand, and Taylor fell over. He had trusted to my light, and not taken one on his own account. Although a little dazed and staggered for a moment, we speedily attributed our accident to its legitimate cause. We felt

certain that we had fallen into one of Hutchesson's ingeniously devised traps, and so it was; my foot had caught one of those wires he had stretched across for the circumvention of the jokers. We grasped our way upwards, and as I turned the handle of the gallery door, a heavy thud fell upon our ears. I opened it, and saw our host and the barrister struggling to recover from an exactly similar mishap to that which had brought Taylor and myself to grief. Neither party had, however, encountered anything personal or impersonal on their way, except the confounded wires. Taylor's room and mine were found locked. We opened them, but they were both empty, nor was there the slightest trace of any strange visitant. We looked at each other, and were about to descend, when we heard footsteps in the adjoining passage. We dashed through the door, only to encounter the worthy Squire in extreme *déshabille*, candle in one hand, and a poker in the other. He had, it seemed, been roused by our falls and voices into the idea that there were burglars, or something

approximating to them, about, and had sallied forth to see what it might be.

"Hutchesson, in replying to his enquiries, promptly invented a fable concerning a stray cat that had been shut up in the gallery; how he had come to put her out, caught his foot in the carpet, and so fallen, and that the rest of us had run up to his assistance. The old gentleman looked somewhat sceptical, but eventually accepted the explanation, and retired to his own apartment.

"'By Jove! I was in agonies,' ejaculated Hutchesson. 'Dear old boy! I was afraid he would insist upon making further investigations, catch his foot in one of my confounded wires, and break or sprain something or other. Just help me take them up before we go down again.'

"We picked up the four or five wires that our host had drawn athwart the passage and stair, and then returned in wondrous sober mood to the hall.

"'It is queer!' remarked Hutchesson, at last breaking silence. 'I am no believer in

apparitions, certainly; but if this is a practical joke, by Jove! it's cleverly managed.'

"'I am a dead sceptic about everything, till it is supported by evidence,' rejoined the barrister, sententiously; 'but the case looks awkward for the ghostly defendant. The face we saw to-night was indicative of a woman of strong passions, who would stick at nothing for their gratification. We have failed totally to bring it home, or to discover any indication, that we as yet are likely to bring it home to a terrestrial. I never saw a ghost before I came to Chatton, but I don't feel quite sure I hav'n't now. I don't particularly mind your monk, Hutchesson; but, by Jove! I tell you fairly, I cry off closer acquaintance with your nun. I never saw, handsome though it was, a more devilish face in "the Old Bailey."'

"'I don't understand it,' rejoined Hutchesson; 'but I shall get at the bottom of the mystery, never fear. Ghosts and gammon are synonymous terms. However clever the trick, a mystery of this sort is always to be

penetrated by a man of determination, and I mean to know all about this, if I die for it.'

"That many an upward glance had been thrown to the gallery, during this conversation, I need scarcely say; but the nun appeared no more.

"'Well, you are all three in for an early start to-morrow; so perhaps it would be as well now to think about bed. I wish to goodness you would all stay on another week or two, and polish off the ghost and the remainder of the grouse, but I suppose it is hopeless to ask any one of you.'

"'I am tied by the leg, old man, just as close as the soldiers here,' rejoined the barrister, 'and go to-morrow I must. The grouse have been glorious fun, and though our ghost-hunting to-night was not a success, I should not have minded another attempt to collect evidence in their favour. I mean, to establish it as the malignant machination of a mortal.'

"'I mean to see it out,' said Hutchesson, doggedly, as he lit his candle.

"He did, poor fellow, and it was many months before he could tell the sequel, which I am about to tell to you. We all departed the next morning, and therefore there remained only as guests the Squire, his wife and daughters, who were pledged to stay, I think, another week. Consequently, when the smoking hour again came round, Hutchesson lit a solitary pipe in the hall. He was a man of great nerve and determination, and had most thoroughly made up his mind to get at the bottom of this mystery.

"What happened that night was this. A few minutes after twelve, the Squire and the greater part of the household were roused by a pistol shot. Ere they could huddle on their clothes and rush down, the second crack of a pistol rang full and clear upon their ears. It was followed by an unearthly shriek. When they all, in a mob, reached the hall, they found it still half full of smoke, while the host lay senseless on his face, clenching a Colt's revolver—of which two barrels had been discharged—tightly by the barrel.

"As the old Squire told me afterwards, for a moment he entertained horrible ideas of either murder or suicide; but cursory examination showed no wound whatever on the inanimate man. A groom was despatched posthaste for the nearest doctor—a matter of some eight or nine miles' ride. Poor Hutchesson was carried up to his room and undressed, the revolver being with difficulty extricated from his rigid fingers. The Squire took it from his hand and examined it. Two bullets had been discharged, but the remaining four were still there. He examined it carefully, and wondered what had induced his unfortunate friend not to use another chamber, but to grasp it by the barrel. This soon became clear to him: whatever the senseless man had been called upon to confront, there could be little doubt he had used the pistol in bitter earnest. It was the old-fashioned Colt's revolver before-mentioned. The undischarged chambers were loaded, but the cap had fallen off in front of the cock, and so stopped the revolution of the breech. Further investiga-

tion showed the mark of a bullet in the wall of the gallery, and another in the hall close to the door of one of the staircases, but as to what had actually happened, no one but Hutchesson could say, and he, poor fellow! was at present incapable of saying anything. The Squire was grit, and so were his surroundings. His wife declared her intentions of nursing the sick man, with, of course, the assistance of the female servants; for the doctor made no secret to them, that there had undoubtedly been some tremendous shock to the nervous system, and that return to consciousness would probably be accompanied by brain fever to more or less extent.

"'In such a case, Mrs. Lindon,' he said, 'intelligent nursing is of the greatest importance, and I really don't know where to lay my hands upon such in the neighbourhood. As soon as he shows returning consciousness, he will commence looking back to the cause that knocked him down, and curious as we may well be to know that story, that is precisely the story he must be neither encouraged

to tell nor to dwell upon for the present. Later on, if all goes well, we may learn it, but for the next few weeks we must never let him touch upon the events of this night, if possible.'

"The doctor was right in his prediction. Poor Hutchesson, when he came—not to his senses but to consciousness, jabbered most confusedly about monks, nuns, and that one awful face. We who could have given some clue to the enigma were, of course, far away; and those whose sad duty it was to listen to his incoherent babble could make nothing of it. At length, owing mainly to the untiring attention of Mrs. Lindon, he pulled through, and was once again clothed in his right mind. He evinced very little disposition then to talk about the events of that terrible evening, and everybody of course carefully refrained from alluding to it. Months went by before the story of that night came out; but as soon as he was fit to be moved, the Squire carried him off. It was evident that he had taken a nervous distaste for

Chatton, and was still too weak to be left alone.

"'It will be a real charity, Mr. Lindon, to take him home with you. He must go from this to make a thorough cure of it, and yet he wants all that looking after that only such women as Mrs. Lindon and your daughters can give—care and nursing—till he has regained his strength. Some of these days he'll tell you, no doubt, what happened to him that night. Remember, when he does, I should like to know, but bear in mind this—wait patiently till he volunteers it.'

"So he was carried off by the Squire, and with the quiet nursing and attention of Mrs. Lindon and her daughters, in some few weeks he not only became himself again, but over head and ears in love with Lucy Lindon. What an outcry there was in a certain section of the London world, when it became known that Hutchesson was engaged to be married to a country girl who had seen but little of the metropolis! In certain circles Hutchesson was deemed, if not a hart royal, yet a

stag well worth the stalking; and, as dear old Lady Scatterstalk said, 'it was disgraceful the way he had been simply "mobbed" by those Lindons. Nothing for him, poor dear fellow, in his weak state, but to propose to a daughter or run away with the mother, no doubt; and she's brazen enough to invite the latter, I dare say.'

"One of those dear old ladies that permeate London society, Lady Scatterstalk, who, having considerably imperilled her own reputation early in life, had been industriously endeavouring to reduce those of others to her own questionable level ever since.

"It was three months since Hutchesson had been brought home, an helpless invalid, by the Squire; and during all this time no one had ever alluded to or ventured to question him about the cause of his illness. He was sitting with his *fiancée* one December afternoon, when he suddenly said, 'Lucy, should you like to know what happened to me that evening at Chatton?'

"'No, not yet, Charlie dear,' she replied,

softly. 'When you are really strong enough you'll find I've all my sex's curiosity about such matters.'

"'Pooh, little woman, thanks to the splendid nursing I've had amongst you, I'm quite strong again now, and can bear to talk of it.'

"'Better not,' she urged. 'Wait till you are stronger.'

"'No,' he said, 'I should like you to know all about it this afternoon. I must begin by telling you what had taken place the two nights before;' and Hutchesson narrated the story of those nights as I have already told it to you. 'The night I fired the two shots, and was subsequently found senseless, I went to the hall to smoke as usual, but, as you know,—in consequence of the enforced departure of my friends,—alone, I took with me the revolver I had brought the previous night, with no definite idea of actually using it further than as a threat. I was still convinced we had been the victims of a clever hoax, and although the apparition

of the nun had been somewhat ghastly, still I believed it was a human personation. I smoked on, occasionally glancing at the gallery, and when midnight chimed, as you may suppose, my eyes were rivetted there. I gazed steadily for some minutes—not a sign of last night's mysterious visitor. I dropped my eyes for a moment, when I again raised them, the malevolent face of the previous evening glared fiercely down upon me. It was an awful countenance—that of a woman in the meridian of life distorted by passion. There was murder in her eyes, and bitterest invective on her lips. She said nothing, but the eyes literally flamed upon me; and though no sound escaped her lips, it required little fancy to imagine them heaping the direst maledictions on my head. For a minute or two I felt paralysed; then recovering myself, I snatched up the pistol and called out—

"'Who are you? Speak, or I fire!'

"Her sole answer was a menacing gesture of the hand. The tension on the nervous

system began, and I called out a second time—

"'If you don't tell me your name before I count three, I swear I'll fire—One!'

"Another fierce threatening wave of the hand.

"'Two!'

"And this time the apparition shook its clenched hand at me.

"'Three—and God help you!'

"I fired; but I purposely fired over the nun, and, as the smoke cleared, I saw her vanish through the door to the back staircase, again shaking her clenched hand as she did so. How the door opened I didn't see.

"Another minute, and the corresponding door into the hall opened; and the figure, almost clawing the air, came straight towards me with such malignance and ferocity impressed on its countenance, as I have never yet seen in any human face, thank God! Once more I cocked the pistol, and this time I'll admit I shot for my very life, as I believed. Still that awful nun came on. Again I

cocked the pistol. She was within eight or nine paces. The hammer did not respond to the trigger, and there was no report. Her outstretched hands were within a few feet of my throat, when, grasping the barrel of the pistol, I struck with the butt of it with all my force at her head. I only know my weapon met no resistance, and uttering a wild cry of despair, I fell forward from the force of my own blow. That is the last I recollect of that eventful evening. When I next came to myself, I was in bed, very weak, and you and your mother taking care of me.'

"What an awful story!" said Lucy in awe-struck tones. "You'll never surely go back to Chatton?"

"'Not to live, certainly. I must go over some day for a few hours to give orders about my own traps, and make a few final arrangements for giving it up; nothing more. I think I have as much nerve as the average of my fellows, but I wouldn't smoke by myself at night in that hall for some thousands.'

"'I am glad—very glad, Charlie, you've come to that determination.'

"Another such scene I think would make a gibbering idiot of me for life, and you see I don't feel justified in running such risks as things are now.'

"Well, you fellows don't want any more account of the spooning part of the story—done it yourselves, no doubt, and think you did it better: but that is pretty much as Mrs. Hutchesson told me the story, when I met her somewhere about a year after the wedding. For the sequel I am indebted to the barrister, who being up in those parts the next season, and having of course heard all the details of the story, resolved to ferret out if there was any legend or tradition connected with Chatton. He met with no success for some time; that traditional oldest inhabitant could recollect nothing of any kind; but just before his visit terminated he was recommended to call upon a neighbouring clergyman of antiquarian tastes, who was reputed to know more of the legendary lore of the

country side than any man in those parts. He did so; and was at once met with the reply, 'Chatton not got a story! My dear sir, the terrible tragedy of the Phædra was almost re-enacted there some two hundred years ago. The then owner of Chatton, a wild, boisterous man, passionately addicted to field sports, was left a widower, with only one child—a son of mild and gentle disposition, and utterly unlike his sire, who felt an undisguised contempt for a boy who preferred learning to field sports, a book to a bridle, or a treatise to a trout stream. When this son was about sixteen, the Squire of Chatton took to himself another wife—a haughty imperious woman, who, like himself, had been wedded before. Their honeymoon was scarce over before storms prevailed, and it was notorious that they got on badly together. Three or four more years and the luckless youth returned from Oxford, where he had been indoctrinated into the humanities; and his imperious stepmother straightway conceived a grand passion for him—such as an impetuous

woman of those days, unrestrained by either social training or principles, might; for the Chatelaine of Chatton was of somewhat humble extraction, and somewhat wearied of her monotonous life. To what extent the luckless boy succumbed to her fascinations, in the first instance, I can't say; but there is no doubt he not only speedily wearied of his chain, but suffered agonies of remorse, that he should ever have been so false to every sense of honour and morality as to yield to her overtures in any way. He became attached to the daughter of a well-to-do yeoman hard by, a fact quickly discovered by the jealous violent woman, who had of all others no right to think of him. In the middle of a stormy scene between the pair the husband suddenly appeared. He overheard enough to convince him that, at least, there had been guilty love passages between the pair; but before they were even aware of his presence, the lady, utterly maddened at finding her love rejected, struck the youth to the ground with a small poignard, which—no

uncommon thing in those days—was laid upon the table as an ornament. The husband, so the story goes, was terrible in his wrath. A Lord of the Manor could do pretty much what he liked in those times, and as the old chronicler tells, their lives for a day or so trembled in the balance. But the convent for one and the nunnery for the other was the eventual sentence. That, as far as I can gather it, was the old story of Chatton Lodge. Chatton House, by the way, was its designation in those early days, and but little remains of the original mansion.'

"To cut a long story short," continued the original narrator, Forrester, "I consider I saw Hippolytus the first night, and Phædra the second, and feel only too thankful I was not in for that second interview with the lady. No; ghosts are best not interfered with. My tip for the future is,—put your head under the sheets and take no notice of 'em."

BRIDAL BARS.

A Celibate's Confession.

When you have once passed forty, it is surprising the interest your female relatives and friends take in your settling for life. Settling, in their estimation, is simply synonymous with marrying. They declare it is time that, as our neighbours say, you "ranged yourself;" that this vagrant club, chamber or lodging existence is quite unbefitting your time of life; that you ought to become respectable, which, as far as I can ascertain, means marriage, slight baldness at the top of the head, some increase of waistcoat, and a tendency to stertorous exercises after dinner. If you leave it to them, I should think the desired result pretty certain to be arrived at.

This is all very well in the abstract, but there are exceptions. The majority of men are destined to be married; there's a small proportion who couldn't be if they tried. I know all the old popular fallacies about it: that to the ugliest woman alive the choice comes once in her life; that the most swivel-eyed, shock-headed, deformed monster can find a mate an he but try. Quite so; but you may be a tolerably good-looking man, with nothing particular to your detriment, and find all attempts to enter the holy state of matrimony unavailing. You say, why? I answer, because it is your kismet, because it is your destiny, because you also shall tend gorillas in the nethermost darkness.

How do I know this? By painful conviction, by observation—worse than all, by experience. I, miserable that I be, am destined to lead a blue-faced baboon about on the other side the Styx, and for no fault of my own. I have striven against this inexorable sentence; but who can battle with Fate—who wrestle with Destiny? Listen

to the history of the man who cannot get married.

I was about thirty when I fell, not violently but prudently, in love—earnestly in love, with sober business-like intentions. The lady had some twelve thousand pounds of her own besides great personal attractions. I am not going to weary you by dilating on her charms. Suffice it to say she was cruelly insensible to mine; and when, emboldened by the bestowal of two after-supper dances and some three or four glasses of champagne, I ventured to put my fate to the test, my hand was courteously but firmly declined: trick number one on the part of my destiny.

Something like five years passed after this rebuff before I ventured to once more place confidence in the smiles of woman, and then it happened in this wise. I was staying at Folkestone, at the Pavilion Hotel, and at the *table-d'hôte* there it was my lot to find myself next one of the most bewitching widows that ever bewildered the head of man. Soft melting blue eyes, rippling brown hair, and

when she smiled, by Jove, a pearl necklace was nowhere. Figure! simply perfect; and as for an ankle, on my soul I can't help thinking of the times now and then when I was the husband of those ankles. Husband! you say. Wait a little. Well, of course I duly rendered all the *petits soins* of the table. I was her constant escort on the Lees, and even took charge of her at a concert and public ball or two. She had scraped acquaintance with a good many people at the hotel; but looking back I am bound to confess they were more of the masculine sex than her own. The women, notwithstanding she cultivated *them* with great assiduity, for the most part held rather aloof from her. Still she bore her own gallantly, and no one could point to lightness or indiscretion on her part. If the puritan women of the sea-side had their misgivings, they at all events could allege nothing, while the freer and more volatile visitors voted Mrs. Patterson "immense fun and handsome as paint."

She was both; but people who described her in that wise were utterly oblivious of the

one great talent she possessed, namely, that of flirtation. She was, I do believe, the greatest mistress of that art that ever existed. To flirt with three or four men at once was as easy to her as stepping into a carriage. If she valsed with you, she was sure to be carrying on what I may designate an amorous optical conversation with somebody over your shoulder. A woman capable of squeezing your hand, pressing her other neighbour's foot, and ogling her *vis-a-vis* all at the same moment. You cannot suppose I noticed her marvellous talent for such little *agaceries* at this time—that was a later revelation. During the Folkestone period I, like others of her admirers, was as blind as a newly-born puppy; destined, like the puppy, to arrive at eye-sight at last, and look out upon a wicked world. That we, her admirers, were terribly jealous of each other I need scarcely observe; that we all at various times vowed to take to port, tobacco, or whist, and adjure the fair Patterson, you may readily conceive; but somehow it always ended in our consuming

much soda and brandy at night together, eulogizing our enslaver, and secretly pitying one another for being so conceited as to suppose she really did care a rush about anybody but our own individual self.

It was one night, when the surf gently kissed the shingle, and the moon shone down on the waters in all her majesty, that it was my privilege to be the escort of the widow in her after-dinner stroll on the Lees. I had not altogether made up my mind on the subject. I should have liked to have known a little more about the fair Patterson; but the champagne at dinner, the moonlight, the widow's eyes, and the watering-place band had done their work, and I was unmistakably making love with all the *élan* characteristic of the West of Ireland. I had squeezed her hand, and pressed her arm, to an extent that quite warranted cries of agony. I looked up again at the moon, and down again into the limpid blue eyes. I tried quoting Tom Moore, and broke down ignominiously; but I ventured to splutter out an offer of my heart and hand, to

which I received a faltering assent. I felt somewhat staggered at finding myself engaged. I recalled the remark of a friend, who pronounces it the nearest approach to a *douche* bath that he is acquainted with. The excitement was over now; we were descending the Lees towards the hotel, and the widow was murmuring into my ear how she had rejected three of my rivals, and how foolish I had been to imagine that she had ever cared in the slightest degree about any one of them.

"But, Charlie, dear, what could a poor lone woman like myself do until you spoke? In such a gossiping place my sole safety lay in the multitude of my admirers. To have admitted your attentions only was to compromise myself; and you know," here she squeezed my arm affectionately, "you might not have been in earnest."

I certainly had no cause to complain the next day. It was quite evident that *la belle* Patterson had announced her engagement, and my claims were tacitly admitted, while in some instances I was warmly congratulated. As

for the widow, she took quiet but firm possession of me, and I am bound to say no man was happier in his silken fetters. It was agreed we should be married at once. Mrs. Patterson blushingly declined all settlements; her own modest income was derived from an annuity, and she would leave anything I might like to do entirely to my discretion. "I am taking you for yourself, Charlie, and have never thought about such things," she replied gently, when I suggested consulting her solicitor.

We were married, and ran across to spend our honeymoon at Trouville. I must say I thought two or three of her old admirers took advantage of their opportunity on the wedding-day to embrace the bride with unnecessary fervour, and also that Clara acquiesced in the proceeding more cheerfully than I altogether approved of. Still what were they? Straws in life's ocean, we should probably never meet more. But you will ask querulously,—Now you are married, what do you mean by raving about bars to matrimony?

I crave your patience for a minute or two, and you will see.

Now at that time, though on leave and a soldier, I was holding a large civil appointment in India, and, curious enough, had never mentioned the circumstance to my wife. Indeed she manifested no concern at all as to where my income was derived from, and I believe considered it the result of various investments in stocks and securities. About her own money she was extremely reticent; that is to say, as to where it came from, although I was quite at liberty to dip into her purse did I wish to do so. It was wonderful, too, how her old admirers found out our modest establishment, when we had settled down in town; and before I had been three months married, I had discovered what, but for the glamour of love, was quite transparent before, that my wife was as desperate a flirt as ever wore silken slipper.

I cannot say I was quite unmoved by the discovery. I am not of a jealous temperament, but it is a most confounded bore, if

you really do care for your wife, to find on your return to your own house some idiot (of course you look upon them as idiots) or other whispering soft nonsense into her ears, and the pair regarding you with an aggrieved expression which says plainly, "You have no business to come home before dressing time." Under these circumstances it was with quite a sense of relief that I received a letter cancelling my leave, and ordering me to proceed to Bombay forthwith. It was both sudden and unexpected, but the effect the announcement produced upon my wife was very singular. She was most indignant upon discovering that I held an Indian appointment, and insisted vehemently that it was shameful my having concealed such a fact from her all this time. She declared that she would never go out to the East with me, and that she never would have married me had she the slightest idea of my being connected with such an abominable country. I told her that I must go, and that I absolutely declined to leave her behind me. We had several real scenes

on this subject, but at last, finding me determined, she gave in with these significant words: "If you care a rush about me, you will probably be sorry for your decision ere long." Pressed to explain these words, she would say no more than "the tropics did not agree with her."

From this out a singular change came over her. Her soft caressing ways were changed for a bold, defiant manner. She flirted as much as ever, but it was now in a reckless fashion that produced more that one remonstrance on my part. Expostulation usually met with sullen indifference on her side. I had triumphed over destiny and achieved matrimony, and a very cheerful and blessed state I had arrived at. Sometimes I thought of giving in, letting her have her own way, and leaving her behind, but thank Heaven, I didn't. Always do your duty by a woman; it is one of the few accounts that Providence settles in this world—at all events, it did in my case. When we embarked at Southampton there was a little episode to which I attached

but little importance at the time, but turned out to be pregnant with much interest to me later. We were selecting our dinner seats in the saloon,—an ordinary practice, as you know,—when a gentleman suddenly advanced towards my wife and exclaimed, "God bless me, Mrs."—the name I couldn't quite catch —"what! are you going out again?"

My wife drew herself up immediately, and observed in the most freezing tones—

"A mistake I fancy! My name is Senton, as my husband here can inform you."

The gentleman shrank back with an apology, muttered something about "deceived by an extraordinary likeness," and finally retired. That voyage out was remarkable for three things: the shameful way Mrs. Senton coquetted with the male passengers generally; the peculiar interest the strange gentleman, a Mr. Dunn, took in her proceedings; and the extraordinary temptation I felt to drop over the side 'mid the quiet blue waters, and make an end of things as far as I was concerned. My wife was

goading me near to madness, and I could scarce bear to think of the years before me, chained to this reckless, brazened flirt. All the soft, caressing ways of the old Folkestone time were gone. Now she exulted in smoking cigarettes, staying late at night on deck, or otherwise shocking the proprieties.

We arrived at Bombay at last. I had voluntarily slipped my neck beneath the yoke, and must carry my burden as I best could. However gruesome the future may look, the present must be attended to. I and my wife, like everybody else, were busily closing our trunks and preparing to land, when a message was brought down to me that a Mr. Tanning was on deck, and desired a few words with me.

"Tanning?" I replied, testily. "D—d nonsense! never heard of the man. Tell him I am packing to go ashore, and can see no one."

A few minutes, and the steward returned with—

"Gentleman's compliments, and he says it

is business of the greatest importance, and that he will detain you only a few seconds."

I gave vent to a strong expletive, and once more sent word that I was engaged at present. If he wished to see me, he might call at Watson's Hotel that evening.

Once more did the steward return, and this time with Mr. Tanning's card, with a couple of lines in pencil written thereon, to the effect "that it was no idle business he wished to see me upon, but a matter of great importance to myself, and that he felt quite sure when I heard what he had to communicate, I should forgive his unseasonable intrusion."

Somewhat curious, but feeling very wrathful, I went upon deck, where Mr. Tanning was speedily pointed out to me.

"Ten thousand pardons, Mr. Senton," he remarked, raising his hat; "but I can assure you it is no light matter upon which I have to trouble you. May I suggest we adjourn to your cabin at once?"

"Impossible!" I replied. "My wife and her maid are both busied there, preparing to

go on shore. Say what you have got to say here, and oblige me by being as quick as you conveniently can about it."

"My dear sir, my business concerns your wife equally with yourself."

"Then it must be said ashore. You can come to the hotel to-night."

"Excuse me, Mr. Senton, but my instructions are that it is to be said on board. I shall carry out those instructions."

"A solicitor, I presume?"

"Just so; and believe me, Mr. Senton, it is very much better for you and everybody concerned that what I have to say should be said in private."

I was staggered. I thought for a moment, and then said:—

"Very well, wait a moment while I prepare my wife."

I ran down and told Clara that a Mr. Tanning, a solicitor, insisted upon seeing us before we landed.

She turned pale as death muttered, "It is shameful; he would never dare;" and then

once more resumed her old reckless demeanour. I said nothing, but left the cabin, returning in a few seconds with the solicitor.

"It will be as well to close the door," he remarked, as he bowed politely to my wife.

I did so.

"Mrs. Sandiford," said the attorney, "I am instructed by your husband to inform you that if you set foot in the country you will be immediately given in charge for bigamy; to remind you that your separation was conditional upon your residing always in Europe, and under another name. Your return to this country is a clear breach of that covenant, and it is difficult to imagine what could have induced you to do so as a bigamist wife. You must be recognized infallibly. Indeed, Mr. Dunn knew you at once on board the steamer."

"You mean to say this lady is already married?" I exclaimed.

"Undoubtedly. I beg to say I have discharged my errand."

"Yes, I am married!" suddenly said Clara,

vehemently, as she started to her feet. "I hate him, but I respect him in some wise. He is hard and pitiless. He knows me, and how to treat me. What made me marry you? Debt, as you would have found out later. You were the first victim came to my net, and I had no conception that you had any connection with India. What induced me to face coming here? You'll do me the justice to say I did my best to avoid it? What did I hope? That some one would run away with me at Alexandria. You are free. Take advice, and don't believe in the next soft-voiced woman you may meet at a watering-place, and of whose antecedents you may know nothing. You can tell Mr. Sandiford, sir, his commands will be obeyed," and with a haughty inclination Clara gave the attorney to understand that his interview was over.

I landed a free man that night, and learnt subsequently that my bigamist wife had been a notorious "light of love" throughout Bombay, till her husband practically "put her away."

Destiny had not only settled that I should not get married, but had read me a lesson sufficient to deter most men from ever tempting fate again in that fashion. For years, if a woman smiled kindly on me, I felt a shivering down the spine, and much nervous trepidation at the bare thought of an entanglement; but you get over most scares, however bad they may be, in time; and so at last I forgot my brief and stormy matrimonial experience, and began to think that at forty it behoved a man to settle down. I had done with India now. A venerable aunt or two had both sought a better and brighter world on their own account, but had very properly by their last wills and testaments endeavoured to brighten this vale of tears for the luckless nephew they left behind. I had just received a good appointment at Aldershot, and in fact was ripe for matrimony. When a man wants a wife to keep *him*, she of course requires some little looking for; but when a man not absolutely a gorilla, nor unusually fastidious, with a tolerable home to offer a woman, seeks

a partner, he should not be very long before he finds his affinity—at all events I was not. I was staying in a big country house for some two or three balls, and there met a bright cheery girl of eight-and-twenty, who attracted me much. She was of good family, not altogether dowerless, very nice-looking, and most decidedly popular. Before the first week was over I had made up my mind to marry Miss Threshley if I could; a few days more, and we were engaged. I was congratulated on all sides most heartily, and really felt myself that I had been a fortunate man to win so frank and honest a girl as Maggie Threshley for my wife. There was no nonsense about her whatever, but I soon discovered she was of a rather sensitive disposition, more especially that she was keenly alive to ridicule. One could not but feel that she would be terribly perturbed at any *bêtise* committed by herself or anyone closely connected with her; that she was a woman who might be laughed out of her better judgment. No need to shrug your shoulders,

mes amis; there are very few of my or your acquaintance who can face the ridicule of their circle. Still, sensitive as Maggie was to the criticism of the world, I had never outraged her feelings on this point. I was an old campaigner, and could hold my own in ball-room or turnip field, at lawn tennis or whist table; did most things fairly; and had the common sense not to embark in what I did not understand. We got on together excellently. I have no doubt we should have been getting on excellently now, had it not been for destiny. When your kismet is to live alone, it is no use looking out for an Eve and Garden of Paradise.

Our wedding day was fixed, and then we separated. Society, as you know, so thoroughly recognises the transformation the marriage rite constantly produces, that it is always anxious to witness our last bachelorhood or spinsterhood moments. Friends who never troubled themselves about you before seem to entertain a morbid desire to have a look at you at such times, and both Margaret

and myself were to go through a round of visits to our respective connections. I was not to meet her again till a day or two before the ceremony in London, where she was to repair to finish off the purchasing of her trousseau. It was the evening before my marriage. I had spent a couple of hours with my enslaver, having arrived in town that morning, and no blither gentleman ever bedecked himself in the orthodox sables than myself. I purposed no wild farewell revel, as is the wont of many before taking the mystic leap from singleness, selfishness, and sorrow to duplicity—I beg pardon, I mean the duplicating of every earthly happiness. As I adjusted my white tie before my dressing-table in Norris Street I said—"Now to pick up a quiet friend to dine with me at 'the Junior.'" A quiet cigar after dinner, then home to bed, and I shall be all ready for the wedding to-morrow morning at eleven.

We were to be married at St. Luke's, Chelsea.

I was ordering my dinner at the coffee room

desk when my old friend Bob Thurston touched me on the shoulder.

"God bless me," he said, "why I haven't seen you for ages; how are you? and where have you been?"

"Fit as fiddles," I replied. "I haven't been in London for close upon six months. If you're going to dine let's dine together. I'm to be married to-morrow, and—"

"No, I bar that," he interrupted. "No! you *won't* tell me all about it. I know she's an angel and congratulate you—remember that's done. We'll dine together with pleasure, but I've seen too many friends embark on matrimony's sea to be enthusiastic about it. I've nothing to say concerning it one way or the other, further than it strikes me as speculative. Ah, here's the soup and sherry. Allow me," he continued, as he filled up our glasses. "Here's health and happiness to the pair of you anyway. Yes, just a teaspoonful of sherry in the soup—you'll find it mellows it."

I fancy I behaved very well, for although

Bob Thurston from that out dropped the fact of my being about to be married so completely that he might have been in perfect ignorance concerning it, yet I never attempted to obtrude it upon his notice. He gossiped pleasantly as old Bob always did about all the floating *calembourgs* of London—of the latest scandals, social, theatrical or turf. In short, by the time we had finished a magnum of '48 and Thurston suggested "coffee and a cigar," I was conscious of having had a capital dinner in capital company. They don't always go together.

"Not been here for six months!" exclaimed Bob, as having paid our bills we strolled across the hall; "then, by Jove, you've not seen our new ground-floor smoking-room. Carried it, you know, last general meeting, after a devil of a fight with the old Conservative element, who snore and don't smoke. Here you are, double doors you see; we're pledged to consume our own smoke."

A few paces more up a passage and we came to close list-bound double doors again.

"Extra precaution of Conservative element," laughed Bob, as he opened them; "they're quite determined we shall keep our smoke to ourselves."

The room was a smoking-room of very ordinary proportions and appearance, furnished after the fashion of such apartments, and remarkable only for one thing. At the far end, and at the opposite side to which we had entered, there was a large turnstile placed in an ordinary doorway, but with a door apparently behind it.

"What on earth is the meaning of that?" I enquired of Thurston, when our cigars were well aglow.

"Ah!" he laughed, "that is our paternal grandmotherly Anti-tobacco Conservative Snoring element again. They are so apprehensive of anyone carrying a lighted cigar through the hall, that they have provided that egress for men with half-consumed weeds. You go through the turnstile, open the door beyond, and find yourself in St. Alban's Place. Of course you can't come in that way, as the

turnstile only revolves in one direction, otherwise there would be no check whatever as to who came into our smoking-room; but to a man who like yourself lives out that way, it is a convenience."

"I have no doubt I shall avail myself of it before long," I replied, and when after a desultory talk with Bob Thurston, I rose to seek my pillow, I duly passed through the turnstile to get to it.

I was up betimes the next morning, and wondrous careful of my attire, as befits a brave who goes not upon the war-path, but to a foregone triumph. No risk here of coming home with feathers trailing in the dust, bleeding, beaten and discomfited. I was to bear away my bride by consent on all sides, a shower of rice and silken slippers the direst peril that awaited me. I hummed the last popular opera air as I ascended the steps of the Junior, and found myself singularly enough the first man in the club. Of course somebody must be the first man, I know, but I never had been before. I never even knew

anyone who was so upon any occasion. On reflection I've no doubt the first man is generally the same, and his identity kept strictly secret by the hall porter, and I feel I could take a strong interest in his history and daily life. How arose those restless and misanthropic habits for instance? Was he a printer in his early youth, &c.?

Musing over these things I sat down to my eggs and coffee, and affected to take some interest in last night's debate. As if anybody could be interested in a *division*, who was so immediately contemplating a union. No! on your bridal morn don't worry about newspapers. What matters the Eastern question, when compared with "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?" I finished my meal abruptly. Just time, I muttered, for a cigar. Ten o'clock. Yes, a quarter of an hour before the brougham and my best man Major Enderson were due in Norris Street. I will have twenty whiffs, just to soothe my system, and with this determination I marched off to the smoking-room.

Not a soul there at such an hour, as may be well supposed. A momentous period this,—last few minutes vouchsafed me of self-communion as a bachelor. Well, it must be very nice to be settled down, I argued; and *when* you are asked to stay in country houses, you are no longer relegated to the attics, or what your host generally calls "bachelors' row"—a deuced inconvenient collection of cells, where the bells don't ring, but in which you are jollily told you can do as you like. From experience I know this means, shave without hot water, wash without soap, and as a rule brush your own clothes. True, you may smoke *ad libitum*, but tobacco and freedom don't quite balance comforts.

No more "bachelors' row," nor "monkeries," nor "unmarried refuges" for me any more. I may not go out quite so much as before, but I am released, at all events, from those horrible sham genialities. My host won't dare to put my wife in a cucumber frame or the apple loft; and on my soul, I suspect

the latter to have been the accredited use of my bedroom on more than one occasion. Halloa! time's up, by Jove! And throwing my cigarette into the grate, I passed through the turnstile. I turned the handle of the door beyond and pushed. The door stuck—handle not turned quite home, I thought. I turned it again. I pushed,—moreover I kicked; at last it dawned upon me that the door was locked. Bore! nothing for it but to retrace my steps. I betook myself once more to the turnstile; it was immovable. Of course, it only turned one way. No rat was ever more neatly trapped than I, with the locked door on one side, and the unturnable turnstile on the other. I burst out laughing at first; it was so ludicrous; and then I gave vent to a tremendous "Waiter!"

There was not the faintest response. Remember, there were two double doors between me and the rest of the club; and that I was imprisoned at the furthest end of the smoking-room, and that it was a perfect toss-up whether either servant or member

looked into the smoking-room for the next two hours. It was not till I had vainly screamed "Waiter!" "Wai-a-ter!" for something like ten minutes that this occurred to me. When it did, it was with all the gravity of the situation. Ten-thirty by my watch, and I was to meet my betrothed at eleven at St. Luke's, Chelsea. "Waiter!" in a sharp and peremptory tone. "Waiter—" in a persuasive tone, but always reverting to the crescendo, "Wai-a-ter!" No response—not a sigh. I got frantic. I even wildly wrestled with the bars, as if my impotent strength could avert against the grim cog-wheel of the turnstile. I screamed—I raved. Ten-forty-five, and had I been entombed alive as in the good old monachal days—backsliders occasionally were—my shrieks could not have been more futile. Eleven, I had almost ceased to cry now, but in my despair I once more vociferated, "Wai-a-a-ter!"

An answer at last, not from the club, but from the outer street. It is brief and pretty.

"Say Bill, here's one pretty wolfish for

his mutton chop." A revelation. I turn from my hopeless shouting *into* the smoking-room, and commence to parley with my new sympathisers:"

"Boy, run round "——

"Quite so, my pippin!"

"'Axed him where he came from,
Where do you belong to?'"

"Tell them to get the key and let me out."

"Yes. 'Walk into the garden; it's a warm and sunny day.' Who's they? who's you? where's the key? what did you do it for? and what have you got for it—five years or seven."

"You eternal fool, run round to the porter and tell him to let me out."

"Who's dat knocking at de door?
Who's dat knocking at de door?
Am dat you, Sambo, no it am Jim,
Guess he ain't good looking, and he can't come in."

"My opinion, gentlemen, is," exclaimed the atrocious *gamin* outside my prison, "that he ain't good-looking, and he can't come *out*. Shut up, Ugly, and don't go interrupting a

quiet religious meeting in a back street with your 'orrid language."

A quarter past eleven struck and too late; I couched my appeals in more conciliatory language, only to be met by derisive jokes, catcalls, the clatter of boots engaged in break-down dances, &c., and sarcastic enquiry as to "what I had been up to?" At last a measured tread, and a scuffling of feet fore-told the advent of a policeman. I hailed him strenuously, and after a little he comprehended where the call came from, and what I wished him to do. He went round at once to the porter, and at twenty-five minutes to twelve I was once more a free man, having been a prisoner for one hour and twenty minutes.

I rushed across to my rooms; the brougham was gone, so was my best man. I hailed a hansom, and drove as hard as I could to St. Luke's, nobody there—neither wedding party, clergyman, clerk, nor verger—not even anyone to tell me if such a party had ever been there. I drove frantically to where Maggie was staying, only to find she had just

left for Brighton, and that her friends were most decidedly not at home to me. I wrote to her and explained the whole thing. She replied that she had a particular objection to being made a laughing-stock of, and to that I had already exposed her. She believed in my excuse, but that only made the affair still more ludicrous. She could not begin wedded life with such an historiette attached to her marriage. She wished me every prosperity, but our union henceforth was impossible.

I have done now. I shall try no more. Say what you will, there are those like myself whose destiny it is to live alone. Bridal Bars are our kismet, and Celibacy is our doom.

"PLUCKED."

A Tale of a Trap.

A LITTLE past that bit of raised pavement that goes by the euphonistic title of the "Maid's Causeway," on the Newmarket Road, Cambridge, stands a small tavern rejoicing in the peculiar title of "The Smelt"—a very ill-painted representation of this fish forms the sign, and it is well known in the town as what is designated "a sporting house." Well known, especially to the University, notwithstanding it lies in the prohibited district of Barnwell, supposed by College authorities in the days of which I am speaking to be the home of much ungodliness and temptation. The house was kept by two brothers of the name of Parrott, while Nancy Parrott, their

sister, was barmaid; and to the susceptible youth of the "Varsity," Nancy's bright eyes, glossy tresses, and quick tongue were dire temptation.

As for the Parrotts, in the way of dogs, ferrets, badgers, rats, pigeons, &c., they would have undertaken to have supplied any quantity at inconceivably short notice. They were very sharp practitioners; and those famous terriers that they sold pretty constantly to the undergraduates never killed rats somehow as they did in the pit at the back of "The Smelt." You see the Parrotts upon such occasions found their own rats, and it was rumoured that when it was a case of selling a dog, they gave the dog a lift by hocussing his rats—a half-drugged rat being a very different thing to dispose of from a good savage native of the sewers who is fighting for his life. Report too had it they were in connection with the London dog-stealers, and were still more intimately connected with all the poachers of Cambridge—not at all above taking a gun themselves, when the affair

seemed worth while and not particularly dangerous. They were both good shots; but we all have our *forte:* Bill, the elder was deadly in a dry skittle-alley, while Tom was undeniable at the immolation of pigeons.

The two brothers are sitting smoking this Sunday evening, in the bar parlour, and apparently discussing some question with considerable vehemence. Bill holds a copy of *Bell's Life* in his hand, and waving the long clay pipe he is smoking in oracular fashion, exclaims, "D—e! I tell you again it's made for us. Why, Tom, you'll land this in a canter. Listen while I read it over again:—

'A Member of the Oxford University will shoot any Cambridge man for £100, half forfeit; 21 pigeons, 27 yards rise. The advertiser has staked £50 in the hands of the Editor of *Bell's Life*, which if covered will result in a match.'

"Exactly," observed Tom Parrott, "but he means a member of the University."

"Then why the —— don't he say what he means? He says 'a Cambridge man,' and you're a Cambridge man, a'n't you?"

"Just a little bit," rejoined the other with a grin.

"Well, if we make stakes, he must either shoot or forfeit. What do you say, Nance?"

"I agree with you, Tom; he didn't mean shooting anything but one of the Varsity fellows: but as it's worded, I don't see how he can get out without paying forfeit, if he's square."

"We'll plank the pewter, and accept this to-morrow, Tom. We know the shooting of undergraduates at this place, and we know what sort of chance they'd have with you at twenty-one pigeons; it isn't likely Oxford's going to be much better. I tell you it's a hundred in our pockets, let alone what we may get on in bets afterwards."

"Well," returned the younger brother, "it's getting time we did something; the last Newmarket Meeting was a caution, and our house a'n't up altogether for dogs. Ever since that Tresilton fellow was hit over that fox terrier, the young gentlemen don't seem so keen about our dogs as they were."

"Yes," said the girl dreamily; "I'm sorry you took in Mr. Tresilton. He's a dangerous man to play tricks with, believe me."

"I believe she's taken a fancy to him," retorted Bill, with a sneer.

Nancy gave a slight start; then raising her head, looked her brother straight in the face. "No," she said, "I'm not such a fool. I'm afraid. Listen: I can flirt and joke with all the rest that come here; but he is different. That man could make me or any other girl mad in love with him, if we began philandering. He's cool, relentless, and persevering. He's never taken the trouble to try in earnest, as far as I'm concerned; and I don't mean he shall have the chance."

"Why, Nance?" said Tom, curiously.

"Because I am afraid of him; because I fancy he'd succeed; and that you'd find me gone some morning, though not to church."

"I'd break every bone in his skin," interrupted the elder Parrott, "if ever such a thing happened, and he didn't do you justice."

"Don't be afraid; it's not going to happen.

But, my brother, single-handed you'd find Tresilton awkward to meddle with. He is what you call all wire and whipcord, and he can use his hands to boot. I hear plenty of stories of his pluck and endurance, believe me. He's quite the man of his college; and though I cannot make out why, a sort of University hero besides."

"Well, he's the proprietor of no end of a fox terrier besides," rejoined Bill Parrott, with a grin. "He a'n't very cute, or he'd have twigged that dog had a soft drop in him, and wasn't a particularly well bred 'un besides."

"He knows it now; and from what I've heard he's not one to neglect squaring an account of that sort."

"I don't see any particular harm he can do us—eh, Tom?"

"Not I. Do you, Nance?"

"No indeed. I shouldn't think anything would come of it; but you both give me the credit of being sharp."

The brothers nodded assent.

"Then take my advice, and leave him alone

in future. You know I never counselled you to refrain from a promising stroke of business before, and you never heard me say I was afraid of a man before. Now I do both. That should be hint enough for you. But it's time to close: put up the shutters, Tom, while I lock the beer-engine."

Another half-hour, and the inmates of "The Smelt" were sleeping the sleep of the righteous; although it is open to question whether the slumbers of the wicked are not the less troubled of the two.

True to his purpose, Mr. Parrott senior indites a letter the next morning, addressed to the Editor of *Bell's Life*, accepting the challenge and enclosing a draft for £50, for which, in due course, he received an acknowledgement. A few days later, and another letter comes to him, of which we subjoin a copy:

"Hatchard's Hotel, Piccadilly,
"August 18th.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have just received your letter of the 14th, forwarded to me here by the Editor of *Bell's Life*. You surely must

understand, incautiously as I'll admit it was worded, that it was meant to apply to Members of Cambridge University only. You will consequently at once recognise that a match between us is impossible, unless I am in egregious error in fancying that you are not a University man. I can find no such name as Parrott in the 'List.'

"I remain, Sir,
"Your obedt. Servant,
"FREDERICK CHARLESTON."

"As I thought, Nancy: just what I said, Tom. Didn't I tell you the beggar would want to back out as soon as he found Cambridge wasn't going to stand his confounded swagger?"

"Well, I don't know about your telling. Nance and I both told you, five days ago—the night before you wrote, you know,—that the challenge was meant for a Varsity swell."

"And as I said then, why the — don't they say what they mean. I'm not going to let them out so easy. I shall answer this fellow, and tell him he'll either shoot or pay forfeit. Eh, Tom?"

"We ought to collar that fifty," replied

his brother, grinning, "if it's only to give him a lesson in English. But them Oxonians don't know much, I believe."

"Then it's high time they were taught," rejoined Mr. Parrott senior; and with that he sat down and indited an epistle to the effect that he did not understand shuffling or quibbling; that Mr. Charleston had challenged *any Cambridge man*; that he had accepted that challenge on behalf of his brother, Mr. Thomas Parrott; and that he opined now there was nothing left for Mr. Charleston, their stake having been made, but to either shoot or pay forfeit.

To this in due time came an answer from Mr. Charleston, to the effect that the quibble was indubitably on the side of Mr. Parrott,—that the challenge was addressed to the University of Cambridge, whereas Mr. Thomas Parrott was simply an inn-keeper in that town—a most respectable man, no doubt, but not of the stamp to which the advertisement was intended to apply,—Mr. Charleston must certainly demur to paying

forfeit; indeed, he would shoot sooner than do that; but Mr. Parrott must see it was quite a misunderstanding, &c.

To all which the triumphant Parrotts simply responded, "Pay forfeit or shoot."

Various letters passed between the disputing parties; but the Parrotts were resolute, and it seemed that Mr. Charleston could not harden his heart to pay forfeit. He even went the length of offering to compromise the whole thing for ten pounds; but the Parrotts laughed at the idea, and held firm to their original demand—"Pay fifty or shoot." They had looked over the Oxford List, and found Frederick Charleston duly inscribed therein; and the more reluctant that gentleman seemed for the match, so much the more sanguine were the Parrotts of an easy victory. They had so worked themselves up on the subject, that their principal apprehension now was that the Oxonian would pay forfeit, which in their eyes would be an almost fraudulent proceeding on his part, so much had they accustomed themselves to look upon

the entire hundred as actually in their pockets. The story of the match got noised about the town, and "Sporting Cambridge" —that is what the Messrs. Parrotts look upon as such—vehemently counsel those gentlemen to insist upon their rights. Mr. Charleston, apparently wearied of the correspondence, at last intimates that he would sooner shoot and have done with it than continue the discussion, and suggests a day on which the match shall be decided. He knows nothing of Cambridge, but no doubt suitable ground can easily be found. The Parrotts jubilantly agree to the day, and suggest the Six-Mile Bottom on Newmarket Heath as a fit place for the contest.

Tresilton had looked in at "The Smelt" more than once during the negotiations, and manifested some curiosity concerning them. He laughed at the Parrotts, and said it was rather sharp practice; but held with them that if they insisted, Mr. Charleston must either shoot or pay the penalty. Very jocular indeed is Mr. Tresilton on the subject, and

jokes Nancy upon the smart bonnet she will shortly appear in as her share of the spoil. He hopes he shall be able to see the match, though he is afraid it will be rather a one-sided affair, as it is scarce likely there is any undergraduate at Oxford who will be able to make much of a fight with such a pigeon-shooter as Tom Parrott.

Nancy is the only person who has any misgivings about the coming contest. She cannot say why. She has every confidence in her brother's shooting, but she wishes they knew something of their adversary. Her brothers laugh at her, and point out how very anxious Mr. Charleston was to back out of his engagement, as tolerably conclusive evidence that he had no great confidence in himself. To all of which Nancy can only reply, "Still remember he would not pay forfeit."

"The bigger fool he," replies Bill Parrott, exultingly.

It was the afternoon of the match, and already quite a little crowd had assembled in

the Six Mile Bottom to see it decided. The two Parrotts were there, and their friends; and these latter were of a description not calculated to inspire confidence in an adversary. "Not an honest man's following," would, I fear, have been the verdict pronounced against them by competent judges. Men savouring of strong waters, strong language,—and strong measures also when events ran in other groove than that essential to their personal interests. These, and a sprinkling of outsiders attracted by curiosity, constituted so far the gathering on the heath. But traps pour in rapidly; and soon there is a tolerable sprinkling of undergraduates assembling, for it has oozed out that the big pigeon match is to be shot this afternoon, and the University can always contribute a contingent willing to view any description of sport that lies within their compassing. At last arrives the opposition hero of the match; and for the first time the Parrotts set eyes on Mr. Charleston. A gentleman clothed in a half frock, half shooting jacket of Oxford mixture, trousers,

with waistcoat cut very high, to match, a soft black wideawake, a white tie, and a double gold eyeglass. He is accompanied by two by no means prepossessing-looking friends: gentlemen apparently by their *prononcè* costume of extremely low church principles, but whose beetling brows, low foreheads, short hair, and close-shaved cheeks don't impress one much in their favour. But the first thing that strikes the Parrott party is, how very much older Mr. Charleston is than they expected. They thought to see a young man of two or three and twenty: Mr. Charleston is forty, if he is a day.

"This is a rum un, this is," mutters Bill Parrott, "but he don't look much like shooting, that's one comfort." Mr. Parrott had assembled a pretty strong gathering of his friends, and was prepared to bring off the match on the "win, tie, or wrangle" principle so much in vogue at suburban race meetings of the present day. Mr. Parrott's followers were apparently of that stamp that would object to anything but Tom Parrott's win-

ning, and not to be much depended on when it came to requiring money from them.

"Mr. Charleston, I think, sir?" said Bill Parrott, making his best bow.

"Yes, exactly; but, dear me! I didn't expect this. You've made quite a public thing of it. I declare there's quite a crowd collected. Don't you think, Mr. Sparrow—I beg pardon, I mean Parrott, I'm so nervous, I don't know what I'm saying—that we had better postpone it till another day."

"A match is a match," replied Bill, with a wink to his friends. "You can't be surprised that Cambridge is rather hankering to see the crack shot of Oxford University."

"But I should much prefer its being shot strictly in private," replied Charleston, fidgetting with his double glasses, and finally putting them on and eyeing his antagonist eagerly.

"Now look here, sir, I a'n't going to submit to any more gammon. There's been enough shuffling and trying to back out on your part,

as it is. D—e, you'll shoot here, now, right away, or you'll pay forfeit."

"Now don't, please don't, Mr. Pollett,—no, Mr. What's-your-name—don't be angry. Of course I'll shoot. I can't shoot before such a crowd. It's hardly fair."

"Come, none of that; just you mind what you say. I am not going to stand any of your dashed insinuations. Here's your man. Measure the ground. You just shoot and hold your jaw."

"Is it all right, Dickson?" said Mr. Charleston; "I hope so."

"All right, sir," rejoined the person addressed: a quiet, wiry little man, clad in a suit of pepper and salt, and whose perfect *sang froid* offered a strong contrast to the nervousness of his principal. "I've tossed for you and won. Mr. Parrott leads off."

The five traps were on the usual arc, and around the mark from which they were going to shoot were collected the spectators. These had grouped themselves into two divisions, chiefly: on the right were an assemblage of

the Cambridge roughs and the Parrcttts; on the left were a strong knot of University men, conspicuous among whom was Tresilton, and prominently in the first rank were those two forbidding evangelical clergymen. Dickson handled the pigeons for Charleston, *i.e.*, placed them in the traps for Tom Parrott to shoot at, as his brother did for Charleston. Of course—it is the custom in such matches—each provided birds for his adversary.

A gentleman, in a quiet shooting suit, and connected with *The Sleepless Journal*, who has consented to act as umpire on the occasion, suddenly suggests blandly that they'd better begin; upon which Tom Parrott steps up to the mark, and after indulging in that preliminary flourish, without which apparently pigeons are not to be killed, says, authoritatively, "Pull." Mr. Dickson, who is holding a complicated arrangement of strings in his hand, immediately complies, and a fast blue-rock is thrown up from the left-hand trap: so quick, indeed, does he travel, that the redoubtable Tom is a little back on him with

his first barrel, and the bird, though hard stricken, requires the second to prevent his going out of bounds.

It is now Mr. Charleston's turn to come to the mark; and as he steps up to it with his double glasses on his nose, he is to all appearances more nervous than ever.

"I'll lay fifty to forty against Charleston for the match, and stake the money, blame me!" roared Bill Parrott.

"Done," cried Tresilton; "put it up at once. Here's mine," and, crossing over to the umpire, he placed four ten-pound notes in his hand. Mr. Parrott mutely handed over his fifty pounds to the same gentleman; and for the first time began to have a hazy misgiving that this was perhaps not quite so good a thing as he had deemed it.

"I'd rather nobody would bet upon me," exclaimed Mr. Charleston. "I'm nervous enough as it is; oh, dear!—pull!" and as he spoke he dropped his glasses. It was noticeable that he had altogether omitted any preliminary flourish with his gun, but as the

bird was jerked from the trap, his barrel rang out quick as thought, and the pigeon dropped dead before it had gone ten yards.

Mr. William Parrott opened his eyes rather wide. This might be a fluke, of course; but if it was not, then this nervous member of the Oxford University could shoot, and no nonsense about it. An uneasy feeling began to pervade the ranks of Tom Parrott's supporters: this match might not be quite so good a thing as they had deemed it when making their investments. Again does Tom Parrott toe the mark, but before he can give the order to pull, Tresilton cries in clear, ringing tones:

"A pony against the shooter for the match! Money staked."

A burly brother of the bung supports the licensed victuallers' interest to that amount, and once more notes on both sides are deposited in the hands of the umpire. "Pull!" at length calls Tom Parrott, and what is usually denominated an "uncommonly oily" pigeon steals noiselessly and quietly just above

the ground. Tom fires both barrels and feathers his bird, but fails to bring it to book; it skims out of bounds, and this is the first miss.

Mr. Charleston, still nervous as ever, follows; but, more fortunate than his adversary, cuts his bird over not twenty paces from the trap. Mr. William Parrott begins to have still stronger misgivings. He remembers what Nance had said of Tresilton; and though he has not seen him exchange a word with Mr. Charleston and his friends, yet here he is backing him both substantially and by his presence. Another thing, too: he had reckoned it a point in their game that they had procured particularly small swift blue rocks—very different from the birds usually found for the University matches; but it was apparent to him that the Oxonian, wherever he had procured them, had brought down some clipping birds,—judging by the two he had seen, they were better than his own.

Even did space permit, it would be wearisome to follow the match through, pigeon by

pigeon. Suffice it, that we have arrived at this point: Tom Parrott has just missed his tenth pigeon, making three misses altogether out of ten shots. His adversary has killed eight out of his nine, and is now taking his place at the mark to shoot at his tenth bird. Mr. William Parrott begins to think it high time to interfere in the bully and wrangle line.

"That won't do, sir," he cries; "I've noticed it before. Your foot's over the line half a yard. If you call that shooting on the square, I don't; d—e, we don't stand your Oxford games here."

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Charleston, "I didn't know. I don't think I'm over the line. Pray don't make a fuss; it'll put me off my shooting. I wish to do what's right. Now, my dear sir, I'll appeal to the umpire. Is this the proper place?"

"Quite so," replied the umpire.

"He's been fudging in all along, and I'm d—d if I'm going to stand it any longer. We mean a square and fair match; we a'n't equal to dodges, we a'n't."

"Shut up, you've no business to speak to a man on his shot; 'silence on the stroke, and your temper at all times,' is an old billiard-room maxim you ought to be aware of," cried Tresilton, in his cold, clear, piercing tones.

"I should like to know what the &c., &c., &c., blank, you've got to do with it," replied Parrott fiercely.

"A good deal," rejoined the undergraduate, in his most sneering manner. "I have got money on it, for one thing; and I'm not going to see a member of either University bullied by a set of roughs, because they're afraid of losing."

This was not conciliatory language; and a tumult arose amongst the Parrott party, and for a few minutes the shooting was suspended.

"Oh, please don't let us have any row," exclaimed Mr. Charleston almost plaintively.

"No, no row, my good friends—no, no row, I beg," exclaimed the evangelical-looking gentlemen, pushing their way well into the front, and thereby occasioning Mr. Parrott further surprise and uneasiness; for as they

came prominently forward that gentleman, who had not noticed them before, was struck with what extremely brawny priests these were—veritable Friar Tucks indeed, as Mr. Parrott would have doubtless remarked, had he been indoctrinated in the Robin Hood minstrelsy, but the close study of "Parlour Field Sports," &c., had left him but scant time to cultivate other literature than the Racing Calendar. However, order is at length restored; though there is a sullenness on the part of Messrs. Parrott and their friends, and a gibing exultation on the part of Tresilton and the University men, that bids fair to breed a pretty quarrel ere long. The match continued; and at the finish of the fifteenth round the score stood thus: Mr. Charleston had killed fourteen pigeons out of fifteen, against his adversary's ten out of the same number. It was consequently evident that, to win, Tom Parrott must kill at least five out of the remaining six, and his antagonist none. Should Mr. Charleston kill one more bird, Parrott could only win by

killing all his—palpable to the lookers on that the match was now very near a certainty for the Oxonian—perceptible at all events most clearly to Bill Parrott.

Now, some ten minutes before, there had lounged upon the scene a one-eyed man—a broad-shouldered powerful man of medium height, a quiet, civil-looking man, who kept his hands for the most part buried in his breeches pockets, but whose keen restless solitary orbit took in every thing going on in his vicinity with remarkable precision. When he observed Mr. Charleston toe the mark, and tumble his tenth pigeon in most artistic form, he grinned and quietly asked the nearest bystander what the match was. On being informed he seemed still more amused, till at last his attention was attracted by the two reverend gentlemen of the low church persuasion, who so anxiously deprecated a row. He gave a slight start; then shading his solitary eye with his hand, studied them attentively for a minute or two; at the end of which time he gave vent to a fit of quiet

chuckling, as he muttered, "Oh Lord, here's a game!"

"What is it, Nat?" asked one of the men next him, who knew him.

"Just you wait a bit and you'll see. If them Parrotts a'n't in a pretty hole this time, they never will be. What a plant it must have been all round! How did the match come about? Do they know who they are shooting against?"

"Of course they do; he's an Oxford University swell of some sort. Charleston, I think, his name is."

The one-eyed man closed his solitary optic, gave a long whistle, slapped his thigh, and then exclaimed, "Just so."

"What do you mean? Do you mean you've seen him before?"

"Rather. You know me—you know Nat Langham has been about a bit, and that he does know the ropes. Well, last time I saw that gentleman he was shooting at the Red House for two hundred a side against Lord Huntingfield, and he beat the peer pretty

easy; and his lordship is looked upon as about one of the best pigeon shots in England."

"Nobody ever heard of Mr. Charleston before. It's odd, devilish odd," said the other, a sporting livery-stable keeper.

"No; but perhaps you've heard of Mr. Capper?"

"Good heavens! you don't mean to say that's Capper?"

"I do; and those poor beggars the Parrotts I suppose haven't an idea of it. But, hullo, there's going to be a row apparently. The — fools are going to try and get out by a wrangle, I suppose. Come up, and let's see what's going on."

Bill Parrott, as we know, at the end of the fifteenth round had come to the conclusion that it was high time to do something. His brother, as it happened, killed his sixteenth bird; so Mr. Parrott thought it was incumbent on him to hustle Charleston, and make him, if possible miss. He called out that his foot was beyond the mark; then that his gun was

above his elbow; in short, made every petty technical objection it was possible to take, in the hope of upsetting this apparently nervous Oxonian, who shot better in his tremors than most men in the plenitude of their nerve. One device only was he afraid to try again; that was, offering to bet against Charleston; whenever he or his friends had ventured on that they had been shot by Tresilton and the University men with the utmost alacrity. At last the wrangling ceases, and Charleston gives the word "Pull!" and his sixteenth pigeon is beautifully dropped a few yards beyond the trap;—fifteen out of sixteen, against his opponent's eleven out of the same number. Mr. William Parrott and Co. become more resolute than ever on a row. In the seventeenth round both men kill again; but in the eighteenth Tom Parrott misses, while Mr. Charleston once more brings his bird artistically to hand. The match is over, it being now impossible for Tom Parrott even to tie, and nothing remains but to pay and look pleasant, as the saying

goes. But this was no philosophy of Messrs. Parrot and their followers; they had no intention of looking pleasant, and still less of paying. The first thing they naturally did was to denounce the whole thing vaguely but vehemently as an accursed plant; then to hustle the umpire and stakeholder, as well as Mr. Charleston and his friends.

They closed up viciously for this; they shouted, stormed, demanded their money back from the stakeholder; they said, in stentorian tones much garnished with expletives, that they didn't believe Charleston was a University man at all; that it was a regular put-up thing, and they would be somethinged extremely strong before they parted with the money.

Tresilton and the University men, on their side, closed up sharp and prompt behind Charleston and the umpire.

"You've lost, you sweeps! and now you think to get out of paying by a row. Don't be alarmed, Mr. Charleston; we'll stand by

you, The Gown never funked the Town yet —eh, gentlemen."

"Devil a bit! not an ounce. Close up, and let's give this dog-stealing lot a lesson," resounded pretty freely, in reply to Tresilton's appeal.

Mr. Charleston, not quite so nervous as he had been, still deprecated a row; whilst those two evangelical friends of his, once more pushing their burly forms to the front, denounced quarrelling as energetically as Dr. Watts.

"And pray who the devil are you?" enquired Bill Parrott sharply, turning upon one of these apostles of peace.

"The Rev. Josiah Goss," replied the gentleman addressed, evidently keeping his countenance with considerable difficulty, "better known amongst the Pagan world as Joe Goss."

"Capital!" and "Bravo, Joe!" from Mr. Tresilton.

Mr. William Parrott stopped confounded.

Almost simultaneously his brother had

requested in similar strong language to be acquainted with the name of the other reverend gentleman, and had been informed that it was the Rev. James Mace, better known amongst the Pagans as Jem Mace. And he, like his brother, also paused open-eyed and confounded. It was like the celebrated dead-lock in the "Critic;" but the *Deus ex machinâ* is present and suddenly glides to the front.

"Yes, you darned old image," says the one-eyed man, addressing Bill Parrott. "Those are Jem Mace and Joe Goss. They fought for the championship about two months ago, and you can see which side they're on now. Fight it out by all means, if you like; but Nancy will be puzzled to recognize either you or Tom when you get home."

Mr. Langham was too well-known at Cambridge, and too prominent a member of "the fancy" to admit of there being any doubt whatever of his dictum being correct.

"And who the deuce have I been shooting against?" gasped Tom Parrott, now in the last stage of bewilderment.

"Mr. Capper, of the 'Red House,'" replied Nat Langham, laughing.

"Oh Lord!" cried Tom, "what an infamous swindle!"

"Come, we've no call to pay over this," urged his brother.

"Excuse me," said Tresilton, coming forward. "Mr. Charleston has shot to-day in his real name. Capper is his assumed one. His name is still on the books of Oxford University, though it is sixteen or seventeen years since he took his Bachelor's degree. I can only say, if everyone you stick with a dog makes you pay as dearly as I have done in the return match, you'll have to look up a new trade. And now I suppose you'll make no further objection to our receiving the stakes and bets?"

Mr. Parrott did not: he was good for a rough turn up with most men; but as he expressed himself afterwards, "ten minutes

with Joe Goss was rather too one-sided an affair to be interesting." He retired, gloomily accompanied by his brother from the scene of their defeat; but I have no reason to believe that he has become one whit more scrupulous in the dog trade.

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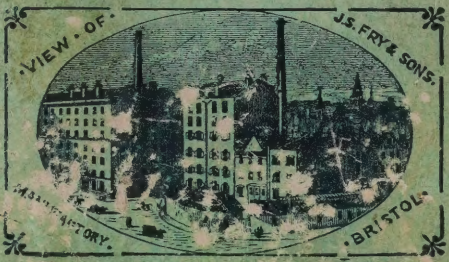

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